German hostages allowed to phone home

Sheikh Saad readmitted to hospital

KUWAIT (AP) — Kuwait's crown prince was readmitted to the hospital Friday, one day after he was released following tests. Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah, who also serves as prime minister, had to "complete required medical tests so that his condition continues to improve," the government said in a brief statement. Sheikh Saad was first admitted to Emiri Hospital Tuesday for two days of testing by Kuwaiti doctors and British physicians flown in from London. He was released Thursday. Sheikh Saad, 67, is believed to have suffered minor bleeding in his colon. Sheikh Saad, born in 1930, fell on Tuesday evening and suffered "slight bruises," a senior member of the Al Sabah ruling family told Reuters. Kuwait's Al Qabas newspaper said Wednesday Sheikh Saad "suffered minor bleeding in the colon which does not call for concern. Doctors advised his highness to stay overnight at hospital to complete (medical) checks."

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جوردان تايمز يومية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الرأي»

Syria wants to resume peace talks

DAMASCUS (R) — President Hafez Al Assad told France's foreign minister on Thursday that Syria wanted to break the impasse in peace talks with Israel but the Israeli government was blocking the resumption of negotiations. Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa, who attended the meeting between Mr. Assad and French Foreign Minister Herve De Charette, told reporters that Damascus was still hopeful for peace with Israel. Speaking to reporters at Damascus airport while seeing off Mr. De Charette, Mr. Sharaa said: "President Assad told Mr. De Charette that Syria has a desire to break the deadlock and the dilemma of the peace process but Israel was blocking the resumption of the peace talks. "The situation in the region is very tense and might explode. Syria does not want that and it is still hopeful that a just and comprehensive peace might be achieved in the region." Mr. De Charette also expressed deep concern about the stalemate in the peace negotiations between Syria and Israel and said Paris would continue to work with all parties to find a solution.

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King offers Kabariti new mandate of 'major reforms'

His Majesty draws guidelines for shape and programme of next government

Fighting stifling bureaucracy and separation of powers top list of priorities

By Farida Salfiti
Special to The Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein disclosed last night that he had offered Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti a new mandate as head of a government willing to confront formidable challenges and to introduce major reforms in the country.

"I talked with the prime minister a few days ago and I told him that if he still has the same enthusiasm, sincerity, courage, integrity and honesty he has been known for...then we will study the issues of the coming stage on a new basis," the King said, in a clear reference to a major shake-up in the Cabinet that the King and the prime minister have been considering for after the current term of Parliament ends towards late March.

"But if he is afraid of braving storms — God forbid, which I do not think is the case — then we have to think of another solution," the King added, alluding to the enormity of the task that any prime minister will have to face in introducing the needed reforms.

The King, in a Jordan Television interview with the weekly 60-Minutes news programme, also drew broad guidelines for the shape and programme of such a government, both on the political, administrative and other levels.

In specific, the King mentioned the separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government, regional representation in the Cabinet, the government's empowerment to act on reforms even before the parliamentary elections are held, tackling the bureaucracy, the cost involved in reforming and reducing it and the media.

"Evidences and clues show that there should not be deputies holding ministerial portfolios. A deputy's duty should be to monitor the government's performance and should devote his time to serve the cause of development and to follow up on legislation," the King said, clearly indicating a leaning towards adopting some kind of a "Norwegian law" which forbids parliamentarians from holding Cabinet posts.

The issue of the separation of powers sparked widespread debate in Jordan when the King hinted last November that it will come under review. The Consitution does not prohibit members of parliament from simultaneously holding ministerial posts and there are currently 22 parliamentarians in the Cabinet.

A change in favour of enforcing a separation between the two branches could take one of two forms: A constitutional amendment specifically prohibiting parliamentarians from holding Cabinet posts or the King expressing this preference in his letter of appointment to the prime minister.

In the interview, the King said that "maybe the issue

(Continued on page 7)



Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor play with an orphan who was among a group of orphans moved on Thursday to the Hashemiyeh Palace (see page 3) (Reuters photo)

King to review conditions at all orphanages

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein said on Friday that he was pained by the state of orphaned children in the country and the lack of care they suffered until their plight was discovered last week.

The King also said he intended to personally review conditiosn at all orphanages in Jordan.

"What shocked me in all that is that it was happening in my country and without me knowing about it," the King said in a wide-ranging interview in Jordan Television last night.

The plight of the orphaned children at Al Hussein Welfare Institute surfaced last week after three hospitals refused to treat a four-year-old child from the institute who was suffering from a stone in bladder.

King Hussein and Her Majesty Queen Noor accompanied by Her Royal Highness Princess Zein rushed to the institute last Saturday and inspected it. The King ordered that the facility put under the supervision of the Royal Court and bad ill or malnoürished children be taken to Al Hussein Medical Centre.

"I saw with my own eyes that the place was crowded and

(Continued on page 7)

Mjalli wins reelection

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Incumbent Hussein Mjalli, an Arab Nationalist, was reelected president of the Jordan Bar Association (JBA) for the second consecutive term in polls held Friday.

Mr. Mjalli, a former member of parliament who will be serving as the president of the JBA for the fourth time, won in the first round securing 1,050 votes of the 2,300 vote casts. But as he failed to secure the required 50 per cent plus one of the total votes, a second round was warranted.

In the second round, Mr. Mjalli secured more than 250 votes higher than his closest rival independent Islamist Saleh Armouti.

In the first round, Mr. Armouti secured 806 votes, followed by Zuhdi Dissi, seen close to Fatch — a faction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation — with 406 while independent candidate Omar Damrah received 60.

In the second round Mr. Dissi and Mr. Damrah withdrew from the race, but as the former did not announce in favour of which candidate he withdrew, Fatch votes were divided between Mr. Mjalli and Mr. Armouti. Damrah supporters backed Mr. Armouti.

The elections were seen as a fierce battle between Arab Nationalists who have been in control of the association since its establishment in the 1950s and Islamists who lost in the last year's by-elections with a margin of 22 votes in favour of Mr. Mjalli. Last April's election also pitted Mr. Armouti and Mr. Mjalli against each other. Mr. Armouti won in the fist round with a small margin. When the other two candidates Ziad Khasawneh and Jawad Younis, also Arab nationalists, withdraw in the second round in favour of Mr. Mjalli, Arab nationalists maintained the control of the association.

The results of the newly elected members of the 10-seat-council were to be announced in the early morning of today.

The newly elected president and council members will hold the seats for two years.

Israel to hand over 2% of W. Bank land; Palestinians reject move as inadequate

Combined agency dispatches

THE ISRAELI cabinet on Friday adopted a plan to turnover parts of the rural areas of the West Bank to Palestinian control but the move was immediately rejected by the Palestinians as inadequate and incompatible with the agreement Israel has signed with them.

At the end of a stormy seven-hour cabinet session, Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu pushed through his plan to withdraw Israeli troops from what Israel said was nine per cent of the West Bank in a pre-dawn vote of 10 ministers to seven.

The withdrawal would nonetheless maintain Israeli control of all West Bank roads and land around settlements and would prevent the link-up of isolated self-rule towns into large blocs of Palestinian autonomy, officials said.

The pullback drew swift condemnation from Palestinian officials, who said it was aimed at deceiving the international community by pretending to withdraw primarily from areas that are already under Palestinian administration.

"This is an awful decision, taken by one side without any discussion and without convening the special commission on redeployments," Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said in Gaza City.

"This is a violation of the spirit of the agreements" on Palestinian autonomy, he said. "This is a conspiracy against the peace process."

Mr. Netanyahu himself added credibility to the Palestinian complaints by mininising the extent of the new land transfer in a bid to calm anger in his right-wing coalition.

"The net withdrawal is only two per cent, which seems reasonable," he told Israel Radio, adding that the troop redeployments called for during this phase represented no problems "either for Israel's security or for (Jewish) settlements."

Under the plan, which is to be implemented in the next few days, Palestinians will expand their authority over an additional nine per cent of the West Bank.

Of the total land involved in the first phase of the redeployment, seven per cent was already under Palestinian civilian administration, although the Israeli army maintained patrols and overall security control.

Another two per cent is in areas under full Israeli control, some of which will now come under full Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and some under joint control.

Details of the redeployment are to be discussed later between the two sides, officials said.

Palestinians currently have total control over only eight main West Bank towns, or three per cent of the territory, plus about 50 per cent of the Gaza Strip.

The United States, which brokers peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, welcomed Friday's decision.

This "represents a serious expansion of Palestinian (National) Authority," a U.S. statement said, adding, "we hope the government of Israel will do more in the second and third phases" scheduled to take place next September and August 1998.

Mr. Netanyahu briefed U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on the Israeli decision overnight and garnered Washington's backing, but also an appeal for more to be done in the future land transfers.

The new Israeli pullback, which comes following the extension of self-rule to most of the West Bank city of Hebron in January, will triple the West Bank area under full Palestinian civilian and police control.

For Palestinians, the gain is far too meager, but Israeli hardliners charged the loss of territory threatens Israel's security and undermine's its bargaining position ahead of negotiations on a final status for the Palestinians.

Former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said Friday that Mr. Netanyahu must stop handing West Bank land to the Palestinians or resign.

Mr. Shamir, 81, has retired from politics, but is still seen as a guardian of the ruling Likud Party's hardline ideology. His views carry great authority among the party rank-and-file.

The Likud Party platform says the West Bank and Gaza Strip, seized in the 1967 war, are part of the "Biblical land of Israel" and should never be relinquished.

As prime minister, Mr. Shamir began peace talks with the Palestinians and Arab states in 1991 at the urging of the United States. However, he refused to budge an inch in the negotiations, and talks went nowhere during Mr. Shamir's term which ended in 1992.

Mr. Shamir on Friday accused Mr. Netanyahu of deviating from party policy. "He was chosen by the party that has had the same policy through the years. He must be loyal to those who elected him," Mr. Shamir told the Associated Press.

"He must resign if he doesn't change the policy," said Mr. Shamir. "I told Netanyahu I was ready for him to remain as prime minister, to accept him, if he changes his policy and returns to the policy he held before the elections."

Several ministers and leg-

(Continued on page 7)

King reminds Netanyahu of pullback commitments; Arafat due here today; Kabariti to co-chair joint panel in Gaza

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Friday telephoned Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and reminded him of his obligation to fulfill all his commitments concerning West Bank troop redeployments.

The King also received a telephone call from Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who complained about the limited scope of an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank that the Jewish state's cabinet announced earlier Friday.

Officials here said Mr. Arafat was scheduled to visit Amman today (Saturday) for talks with the King.

Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti is due in Gaza early Saturday for a meeting of the Jordanian-Palestinian Higher Committee which will discuss cooperation in various spheres. Mr. Kabariti was also scheduled to meet with Mr. Arafat, but it was not known after Friday's developments whether the Palestinian leader would travel to Amman while the committee was meeting or after the talks.

Mr. Kabariti will head the Jordanian side to the meeting while the Palestinian side will be led by Mahmoud Abbas, secretary-general of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said the King telephoned Mr. Netanyahu following the Israeli cabinet's decision early Friday to hand over only another two per cent of the West Bank to the Palestinians as part of a phased pullback agreed in the Jan. 15 Hebron accord.

King Hussein, who played a key role in that accord, discussed with Mr. Netanyahu "the mutual commitments of both Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) under the agreements concluded between them, including the mechanisms for implementing the Hebron protocol reached early this year."

"Under the protocol Israel will implement a phased-pullback from the occupied Palestinian territories until the total pullback in line with the Oslo accord," Petra noted.

Earlier the King had several telephone conversations with Mr. Arafat who complained about the scale of the first Israeli withdrawal.

"This has a negative effect on the peace process," Mr. Arafat told the King, according to the official Palestinian news agency WAFA.

King Hussein and Mr. Arafat also reviewed over the phone the outcome of President Arafat's talks in Washington last week with U.S. President Bill Clinton and senior U.S. officials, as well as the outcome of Mr. Arafat's latest European tour.

The two leaders also discussed developments of the Middle East peace process on the Palestinian track. King Hussein reaffirmed Jordan's firm support of the PNA in its efforts to pursue the peace process and to achieve the Palestinian people's aspirations and restore their rights on their national soil.

The King informed President Arafat that he will be sending him a message with Mr. Kabariti.

Mr. Kabariti said Thursday he would hold talks with Mr. Arafat on Saturday in Gaza to boost bilateral ties and advance Middle East peace.

(Continued on page 7)

Crown Prince: Distorted conceptions of Jordanian economy need to be addressed

By Ghalia Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — There are "distorted perceptions" of Jordan's socio-political stability which need to be addressed, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan told a Euro-Mediterranean conference in London on Thursday.

The Prince urged potential investors to "conduct more in depth studies and visit Jordan to see at first-hand the stability of the country and its open and friendly atmosphere."

The Prince added that studies show that "investors in Europe have a perception of Jordan as being politically risky and geographically vulnerable. This was based on ninety in-depth interviews with actual or potential investors in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. In addition, the study revealed a lack of information to induce investors and a general fear of Islamic extremism."

He said while this perception may equally apply to other south Mediterranean countries, "systematic effort is needed on a continuous basis to improve the business environment and to ensure that investors perceptions are correct."

Prince Hassan told his audience that all economic indicators point to a healthy economic situation: "Since 1990, we have been working hard to get the fundamentals right. The results have been good: the fiscal deficit has been brought down from 20 per cent of GDP in 1990 to four per cent in 1995. Inflation was reduced from 16 per cent to three per cent. GDP growth has averaged six per cent during this period. Foreign debt was reduced from 200 per cent of GDP to about 105 per cent. Jordan has obtained good credit ratings from the international rating institutions. The exchange rate of our currency has also been stable since 1989."

To improve economic performance and create an atmosphere conducive to investment the Crown Prince said, a series of legislation to deregulate and open it to domestic and foreign investment on an equal basis, have been introduced. "The telecommunications and power sectors, for example, have been placed within a regulatory framework that can attract the local and external investor," Prince Hassan added.

He said that those legislations were aimed at attracting foreign direct investment (FDI).

"Up to the eighties (developing) countries' growth depended mainly on development plans driven by government investment. To deal with FDI, especially in infrastructure, a different institutional framework and management style is needed to interact speedily and positively with the potential investor. Such institutional changes are being implemented in Jordan," the Prince added.

Aiming to maximise the

(Continued on page 7)

Erbakan stalling for time in action on army demands

ANKARA (R) — Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's government is stalling for time after accepting army orders to crack down on his own Islamist grassroots supporters.

Coalition partner Tansu Ciller was quoted as saying she would ask for a parliamentary debate into planned anti-Islamist measures, in an apparent tactic to delay their enforcement.

"We want parliament to have a general debate so that everything can be discussed," the Hurriyet daily quoted Deputy Prime Minister Ciller as saying. "Nothing is above parliament," she said. Other papers carried similar stories.

Mr. Erbakan, modern Turkey's first Islamist leader, calmed tension between the government and the powerful military on Wednesday when he signed a statement from the national security council demanding a reversal of recent Islamist militancy.

Turkish markets, which had scented a possible government collapse under army pressure, welcomed Mr. Erbakan's concession.

The secularist army fears Mr. Erbakan's Welfare Party could pave the way to turning NATO member Turkey into an Islamist state.

The council ordered a reluctant Erbakan to enforce laws that ban Muslim sects and Islamic dress and rein in illegal religion instruction classes, seen as hotbeds of extremism.

Mr. Erbakan narrowly won general elections in late 1995 with 21 per cent of the vote on the promise that he would raise the profile of Islam in Turkey after 70 years of state secularism.

Hurriyet said pro-Western conservative Ciller had agreed with Mr. Erbakan that parliament should discuss the planned crackdown in what would be an unprecedented debate.

Deputies routinely carry out the army's wishes without question. The military-dominated security council's decision are forwarded to the cabinet every month to be rubber stamped.

Parliament Speaker Mustafa Kalemli was to meet Mr. Erbakan on Friday for talks on bringing the military crisis on to the agenda, Anatolian news agency said.

No cabinet meeting was held on Thursday, a further sign of government stalling. The cabinet traditionally holds weekly meetings on a Thursday.

There was no meeting on the agenda anyway. It is unclear when it will be," a prime ministry official told Reuters.

The armed forces, which sees itself as the protector of democracy and secularism, has staged three coups since 1960.

The secularist Turkish press hailed Mr. Erbakan's signing of the military statement as a serious climb down by the prime minister but warned that he could try to drag his feet on putting anti-Islamist measures into force.

"Now is the time to implement," the Milliyet daily said in a banner headline. Veteran politician Erbakan, 70, gave no sign of whether he would carry out the army's wishes in practice.

But a Welfare deputy close to Mr. Erbakan said this week he was willing to go to jail if need be to guard Islamist values.

The party's official organ, Milli Gazete, criticised an order from the army for Mr. Erbakan to pass new anti-Islamist laws.

"Nobody can bring back article 163 and interfere with people's consciences," the newspaper said.

The generals want the government to replace article 163, a section of the penal code that was widely used to stamp out Islamist dissent until it was scrapped in 1991.



KINKEL IN GAZA: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat leads German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel to his car after the end of their meeting in Gaza City on Friday (see page 12) (AFP photo)

Jerusalem-based group urges drive against Israel's seizure of ID cards

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A Jerusalem-based organisation is appealing for international help in a battle against an obvious Israeli plan to reduce the number of Palestinian residents of Arab East Jerusalem by depriving them of their identity cards which allow them to enter and live in the Holy City.

The appeal comes amid an intense Israeli drive to confiscate Jerusalem ID cards of Palestinians who, under Israeli law, cannot be considered as Jerusalemites if they have taken up residency elsewhere or stayed outside the Holy City for more than seven years.

The call for international help to fight the Israeli move was issued on the Internet by Alternate Information Centre/Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights Project.

"Since all efforts for challenging the Israeli policy of population transfer in the Israeli courts have remained unsuccessful, only political pressure can force the Israeli government to stop this gross violation of international law and political agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)," said the appeal.

It called upon Arab and international policymakers and state officials to "protest against the policy of ID card confiscations in all official meetings with representatives of the Israeli government and parliament" and to "support political and economic sanctions against Israel (suspension of bilateral cooperation agreements with Israel)."

It also called for coordination among the various groups fighting the Israeli move and urged human rights organisations and peace activists to "organise campaigns of awareness raising and mobilisation against this Israeli policy."

Azmi Abu Saoud, a Palestinian official at the Orient House in Arab East Jerusalem, said that since Nov. 11, over 626 out of 170,000 Palestinians were deprived of their residency rights in the city; 550 of them were Jordanians.

All of them "failed" to convince Israeli authorities that Jerusalem was their "centre of life" as required under a 1952 "law of entry" and related regulations issued in 1974.

Many Jordanians who hold the Israeli-issued ID cards have not travelled to Jerusalem fearing the confiscation of the document.

Under the "centre of life" rule, Jerusalemites should prove that they live, work, and educate their children in Jerusalem in order to maintain their ID. "This is a conspiracy weaved by Israel to Judaise Jerusalem and to make Palestinians, like Armenians, a minority in the city," said Mr. Abu Saoud.

Recent statistics show that Palestinians living in Jerusalem are around 50,000. Those who were forced to leave to the outskirts of Jerusalem because of lack of housing are 70,000, and those who migrated are 50,000.

The confiscation of ID cards is seen as part of an Israeli move to reduce the number of Palestinians who have access to occupied Arab East Jerusalem, human rights groups say.

Today, Jews living in the Holy City outnumber Palestinians, but, the groups say, that Israel is worried over the high rate of natural growth of the Palestinian population would eventually lead to Palestinians regaining numerical strength in Jerusalem.

Egyptian local elections attract few candidates

CAIRO (R) — Most of the candidates in next month's Egyptian local council elections will win their seats and the level of interest in the contest is even lower than usual, political sources said on Thursday.

The liberal Wafd Party, one of the largest opposition groups, is boycotting the elections in the expectation that they would be rigged and most Islamists have turned down the chance to stand as independents for similar reasons, they said.

Partial figures published in government newspapers on Thursday showed that for 22,142 seats, about half of the total at stake, only 26,542 people had registered as candidates by the closing date earlier this week.

The ruling National Democratic Party of President Hosni Mubarak and like-minded independents account for the vast majority of the candidates in the elections, set for April 6.

The Wafd based its decision to boycott on its experience in the parliamentary elections of 1995, widely described as the dirtiest and most violent in Egyptian history.

The courts cancelled the results in more than 100 constituencies but parliament, which under the constitution has the last word on electoral disputes, ignored the court rulings.

Some of the Islamists who might have stood have been detained or jailed as part of the government's crackdown on the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood and its sympathisers.

The government said the parliamentary elections were free and fair and that the local elections will be so too.

The old local councils were dissolved last year after the courts ruled that the voting method, which gave all the seats in a council to the winning party, was unconstitutional.

Indirect talks on Cyprus planned

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Cyprus' Greek and Turkish leaders will open intensive, indirect talks Monday through the United Nations on reuniting this war-divided island, a government spokesman said Thursday.

Yannakis Cassoulides said Gustave Feissel, a representative of the U.N. secretary-general, will lead the talks. He will deliver messages between Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides, the Greek Cypriot leader, and Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash.

Mr. Feissel is expected to make repeated trips across the U.N. buffer zone splitting the island in preparation for a possible direct meeting by the two leaders, Mr. Cassoulides said.

He called the indirect talks "the preparatory stage for the establishment of common ground" leading to a summit.

Cyprus has been unofficially partitioned into a Greek Cypriot controlled south and a Turkish Cypriot north since 1974 when Turkey invaded the island after an abortive coup by supporters of union with Greece. A breakaway Turkish Cypriot state in the north is only recognised by Turkey.

The last direct Clerides-Denktash meeting in October 1994 on reuniting the island in a two-zone federation failed to break a long-standing deadlock.

Then-U.N. Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali blamed the failure on a "lack of political will for a settlement" by the Turkish side.

Mr. Feissel, the resident representative of the secretary-general, has continued to meet separately with the two leaders since in efforts to arrange direct talks.

Mr. Denktash has said he is ready to meet Mr. Clerides unconditionally any time.

Mr. Clerides insists the Turkish Cypriot side must first make clear it is ready to accept U.N. resolutions calling for the withdrawal of an estimated 35,000 Turkish troops and 50,000 mainland Turks from the north and the return of all refugees.

Mr. Cassoulides said Cyprus "is ready, as always" to negotiate on the substance of the dispute.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkish helicopters strike at Kurd guerrillas

TUNCELI, Turkey (R) — Turkish army helicopters fired rockets at rebel positions on Thursday in an air offensive against Kurdish guerrillas in the eastern mountains, security officials said. They said two U.S.-made Cobra helicopters attacked Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) fighters in the province of Tunceli. No details of casualties were immediately available. Air force jets bombed Alibogazi, an almost inaccessible ravine in Tunceli used as a rebel hideout, on Tuesday and Wednesday, the officials said. Fighting in the province's rugged countryside often increases in March when winter snow begins to melt. The rebels abducted a civilian at a roadblock on a main artery through the mountains earlier this week, the officials said. More than 21,000 people have died in the 12-year-old Kurdish conflict in southeast Turkey and northern Iraq. A court has charged an Islamist mayor from Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party with aiding the rebels, judicial officials said. Behrun Aygoren, mayor of the southeastern town of Dicle, was arrested on Wednesday and charged at a night session of the state security court in the city of Diyarbakir, they said. Mr. Aygoren was elected as an independent at local polls in 1994 but later joined Welfare.

Israeli soldier wounded in West Bank

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — An Israeli soldier was wounded by a bullet overnight as he guarded the entrance to a military outpost near the West Bank city of Hebron, an army spokesman said on Friday. The soldier said he was shot at by unidentified attackers from outside the facility at Har Hamara and returned fire. But a search of the area turned up only cartridges from the soldier's own weapon and the army was not ruling out the possibility that he accidentally shot himself, the spokesman said. The official did not provide details on the soldier's wound or identity and said an investigation was underway.

U.S. Navy to help find lost Israeli sub

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The U.S. Navy will join a new search later this year for an Israeli submarine which sank without a trace in the Mediterranean Sea on its maiden voyage in 1968 with 69 men aboard, it was reported on Friday. The Jerusalem Post reported that U.S. Navy salvage teams would participate in the new hunt for the Dakar submarine and that a senior U.S. officer was currently in the country to prepare for the operation. The Israeli army said that a new search would be launched during the summer with the help of unspecified "foreign civilian and military bodies" but it refused to elaborate. Spokesmen at the U.S. embassy were unavailable for comment. Israel has spent millions of dollars in periodic searches for the Dakar ranging from the Egyptian coast to the islands of Rhodes and Crete in the Aegean Sea. The vessel was last heard from on Jan. 25, 1968 as it passed through the Straits of Gibralter on its way from a British shipyard to Israel. A year after its disappearance, the Dakar's emergency buoy washed up on a Gaza beach and an analysis of corrosion on the buoy led the army to suspect the vessel was lost along the Egyptian coast.

Four killed in clash in Mogadishu

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Four people were killed Friday during an exchange of gunfire between militiamen loyal to Somali warlord Hussein Mohammad Aideed and workers of a south Mogadishu oil trader, witnesses said. The driver of an oil tanker and his assistant died in the shootout, triggered by their refusal to pay a tax charged by Mr. Aideed's "government" on commercial vehicles operating in south Mogadishu. The oil tanker was set on fire, which spread to the densely populated Black Sea neighbourhood, where six people suffered burns trying to put it out. Two business stalls were destroyed by the fire. A militiaman who was wounded in the fighting and a civilian who suffered severe burns died later in hospital, health workers said. Aideed supporters deployed dozens of militiamen to the area to prevent an escalation of the violence.

Iranian exiles hold anti-Tehran session

BAGHDAD (R) — Iranian exiles have ended a seven-day meeting in Baghdad discussing how to increase resistance to the government in Tehran, a statement by the Iraq-based Mujahedeen-e-Khalq group said on Thursday. It said 487 members of what it termed Iran's parliament in exile met to discuss what the heavily armed exiles could do to overthrow the Iranian government. "The session by the National Council of Resistance (NCR) came at a crucial time when important decisions had to be made with regard to activities inside Iran and preparations by the National Liberation Army (NLA) to overthrow the mullah's regime," Mohammad Mohadessin, chairman of the group's foreign affairs committee, told Reuters. Mariam Rajavi, proclaimed by the exiles as future president of Iran, attended the session along with her husband, the NCR chairman. The statement said the members saw live-fire exercise by its NLA forces near Iran's border. Baghdad provides refuge to the Mujahedeen, who moved to Iraq in the 1980s during the eight-year Iraq-Iran war. They have mounted raids across the border into Iran, drawing Iranian reprisal attacks.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel. 773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 Cartoon — Mickey & Donald Adventures
14:30 Cartoon — Moomin
15:00 French Programmes
16:00 Gillette
16:30 Doc. — Innovations
17:00 Tilt
17:15 Drama — Blue Heelers
18:00 French Programmes
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Hangin' With Mr. Cooper
20:00 Doc. — Magazine-01
20:30 Prism
21:10 Lois & Clark — The New Adventures of Superman
22:00 News in English
22:25 MacGyver
23:00 Feature Film: "Fighting for My Daughter"

PRAYER TIMES

04:35 Fajr
05:52 (Sunrise) Duha
11:46 Dhuhr
15:06 'Asr
17:41 Maghreb
18:58 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunication Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661656.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 827126
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Sunny to partly cloudy weather conditions will prevail with temperatures rising slightly but remaining below average, and winds easterly to southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.,
Amman 02/11
Aqaba 09/21
Deserts 00/12
Jordan Valley 08/20

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 09, Aqaba 20 Humidity readings: Amman 54 per cent, Aqaba 41 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Khaldoun Kloub 816715
Dr. Nidal Al As'ad 751673
Dr. Issam Al Asmar 890504
Dr. Osama Al Husseini 847289
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Mazen Abu Baker 276852
Al Quds pharmacy (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Randa Shahin 986702
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Reparis 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital..667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikam Modern Hospital (09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (08) 52700 or (08) 523250.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:55 Damascus (RJ)
09:40 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
09:45 New Delhi (RJ)
09:55 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
10:30 Colombo (RJ)
14:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
15:55 London (RJ)
16:20 Cairo (RJ)
17:40 Berlin (RJ)
21:30 Vienna (RJ)
05:35 Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights
12:40 ... Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
18:15 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
21:00 Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:20 Lamaca (CY)
22:25 Beirut (ME)
22:35 Cairo (MS)
23:40 ... Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)
23:50 London (KJ)
01:00 ... London, Damascus (BA)
03:45 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
09:20 Aqaba (RW)
18:55 Sharm Al Sheikh (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:45 ... Marka, Aqaba (add) (RJ)
06:20 Beirut (RJ)
11:05 Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:00 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
12:15 Cairo (RJ)
12:30 Brussels, Paris (RJ)
20:00 Bombay (RJ)
20:05 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:20 Larnaca (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (RJ)
21:00 ... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

Other Flights
00:15 Damascus, Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 Beirut, Athens (OA)
07:00 Beirut (ME)
13:30 .. Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
19:15 Dubai (EK)
23:10 Larnaca (CY)
23:30 Cairo (MS)
23:55 .. Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (AF)
00:40 Amsterdam (KL)
04:35 Rome (AZ)
06:30 London (KJ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
20:30 Aqaba (RW)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damscus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	700/500
Banana	600/600
Banana (imported)	1000/900
Cabbage	100/40
Carrot	200/100
Cauliflower	300/200
Cucumber (large)	240/120
Cucumber (small)	360/250
Eggplant	200/120
Fava beans	700/500
Garlic	1150/800
Grape fruit	150/100
Lemon	310/180
Marrow (large)	260/150
Marrow (small)	430/250
Onion (green)	220/140
Onion (dry)	280/180
Orange	550/400
Peas	900/500
Pepper (hot)	400/200
Pepper (sweet)	380/240
Potato	330/130
Radish	120/50
Spinach	300/150
String beans	750/500
Tomato	260/140



Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor play with Jordanian orphans, among a group of children who moved, on March 6, to the Hashemiyeh Palace after he directed that it be converted into a children's home (Reuters photo)

King, Queen inspect palace conversion to home for abandoned, orphaned children

Royal Jordanian, Amman Chamber of Commerce announce financial, in-kind donations for orphans

AMMAN (J.T.) — Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor, accompanied by HRH Princess Zein Bint Al Hussein, Thursday visited Al Hashemiyeh Palace which the King ordered be remodelled to serve as a home for abandoned and orphaned children.

Under the King's directives, the children's new residence will be heretofore known as Dar Al Bir.

The King and Queen Thursday inspected arrangements taken in implementation of the Royal directive.

They were informed that some children have already moved to their new residence from their previous institution on Jabal Ashrafieh and that some are currently undergoing treatment at Al Hussein Medical Centre.

They were also briefed on the children's conditions by Princess Zein who is guiding the project.

In a message to Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti last week, the King directed that Al Hashemiyeh Palace be transformed into a home for orphans and abandoned children.

He and the Queen had visited the children's previous institution housing 187 abandoned or orphaned children.

In his message, the King expressed dissatisfaction with the services and medical treatment heretofore accorded to the children, stating the "orphaned victims, those free spirits whose suffering we saw during our visit, they ought to arouse our conscience and those of the Jordanian people. We must make sure that the conditions we witnessed not be repeated anywhere in our country."

The King also ordered that the Jordan Armed Forces Royal Medical Services provide medical succour for the children.

In response to the King's summons that the Jordanian society care for the children, Royal Jordanian (RJ) Friday announced a contribution of domestic appliances, blankets and cloth to institutions caring for orphans and handicapped children.

RJ Chief Executive Officer Nader Dahabi said that arrangements are underway for transferring these in-kind donations to the institutions.

Earlier, the Amman Chamber of Commerce announced a donation of JD 25,000 for the same cause.

Mayor outlines plans for tunnels in Amman

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Amman Mayor Mamdouh Abbadi Thursday stated that construction of two tunnels in the third circle area of Amman, slated to cost approximately JD 1 million, will begin on Apr. 1 and be completed in 90 days.

"The third circle area is a black point in terms of traffic, and currently we are studying the underground structure to arrange services such as electric cables, sewer pipes and subsequently determine the tunnel's direction," Dr. Abbadi said.

The first tunnel will connect the second circle with the fourth, while the second will connect Ras Al Ain Street with the Philadelphia Hotel.

"A survey, conducted by the Amman Greater Municipality, revealed that nearly 70 per cent of all of the city's traffic travels over these points," Dr. Abbadi said.

The mayor also said that the municipality is currently studying possibilities of installing two pedestrian bridges or tunnels on University Road.

"We have conducted studies to determine the main danger areas of traffic and pedestrian accidents and we have already installed six tunnels and bridges," he said.

Dr. Abbadi added that the next municipal priority is to install bridges and tunnels in front of Al Dustour newspaper and the Ministry of Agriculture.

When queried as to the possibility of installing traffic lights instead of the bridge and tunnel, Dr. Abbadi responded in the negative.

He said that as cars travel at high speeds on the road, the positioning of traffic lights will hinder the transit pace.

In addition, the mayor affirmed that the municipality is currently studying the possibility of appointing a private company to install traffic signs in the streets of the capital.

"Installing signs in the Amman area is a big problem, costly and requires much effort and this is why we are planning to name a private company to study the streets and install directive signs," he said.



Qatari Crown Prince Jassem Ben Hamad Al Thani, Their Royal Highnesses Prince Faisal and Prince Abdullah, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti meet in Amman (Reuter photo)

Qatari crown prince returns home after two-day visit

AMMAN (Petra) — Qatari Crown Prince Jassem Ben Hamad Al Thani left Jordan Thursday after a two-day visit during which he met with His Majesty King Hussein, HRH Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, members of the Royal family and other senior officials.

In a joint communiqué, Jordan and Qatar expressed concern over Jewish settlements in Arab Jerusalem and stated that the creation of such settlements constituted a direct threat to the Middle East peace process.

It also maintained that the settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim would return the region to a cycle of violence, and was a flagrant violation of UN resolutions, the Madrid Peace Conference and the Palestinian Israeli accords.

The two sides urged the Israelis to pursue efforts on all tracks to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace and called on the global community to honour commitments of providing economic aid to the Palestinians.

They also reaffirmed their commitment to the Arab leaders' call last May in Cairo to reestablish solidarity and take collective action to protect national interests.

Regarding the situation in Iraq, the two countries reaffirmed their commitment to safeguard Iraqi sovereignty and territorial integrity and said they welcomed an Iraqi-UN agreement regarding the implementation of a resolution to exchange food for oil.

The resolution, they said, will alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people.

Jordan and Qatar also maintained concern over the conflict in Sudan and called for dialogue among the warring factions.

They also expressed concern over the situation in Somalia where they described conditions as deteriorating and called on the Arab League to aid in reconciling opposing factions.

In the communiqué, the two countries condemned all forms of terrorism, however they reaffirmed the right of all people to resist occupation and aggression.

Sheikh Jassem voiced appreciation to the King, Crown Prince and Jordanian government and people for hospitality accorded to him and his accompanying delegation during the visit.

Queen attends fund-raising dinner for new national art gallery

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Thursday attended a fund-raising dinner, organised by the Royal Society of Fine Arts in association with the Coutts Group at the National Gallery of Fine Arts, according to a Royal Court statement.

Funds are being raised to support the building of a new national gallery, which will be a landmark of Arab and Islamic art in the Kingdom, the statement said.

The Queen, who is Patron of the Royal Society of the Fine Arts, expressed her pride in the National Gallery, considered "unique in the Third World," for its outstanding collection of contemporary art from the Islamic and Third World.

She added that the gallery has played a vital role in introducing contemporary Islamic artwork to the Western world as well as international artistic traditions to the Jordanian public, the statement said.

The Royal Society of Fine Arts was established in 1979 as a cultural non-governmental and non-profit organisation. It founded the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts in 1980, which houses a permanent collection of Orientalist and contemporary Islamic artwork.

The gallery sponsors and supports local artists, secures art scholarships and organises exhibitions, seminars and workshops both in Jordan and abroad.

The Coutts Group, which is based in London, is the global private banking arm of National Westminster (the NatWest Group) and has branches in 15 countries throughout the world, the statement said.

It provides total wealth management services to over 60,000 clients in three main product areas — investment, trust and fiduciary, and banking services.

Attending the dinner were Their Royal Highnesses Prince Ali Ben Nayef, Princess Wijdan Ali, who is the President of the Royal Society of Fine Arts Board of Trustees, Prince Raad Ben Zeid and Princess Majda Raad, members of the Royal family and prominent government officials, Coutts' Chairman Sir Ewen Fergusson and members of the society's board of trustees.

Actors call for more encouragement

ABU DHABI — Actors, playwrights and directors from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Jordan have called on Arab governments to provide better moral support and encouragement for the theatre movement.

The call was made at a workshop on the Jordanian theatrical movement organised at the premises of the UAE Theatrical Association (ETA) in Sharjah last week.

"The lack of such support is a common obstacle faced by all theatre movements in Arab countries. Although financial aid is vital for the development of theatre, moral support is still a top priority," said Omar O. Ghobash, head of the ETA.

Ghobash felt that Arab governments should play a "more constructive role" to advance the theatre movement.

He hoped that ministries of education in the Arab countries would also pay closer attention to theatre education and include it as a major subject in school and university curriculum.

Arab governments are "imposing unnecessary restrictions and limitations" on the theatre movement, said Fathi Abdul Rahman, a Jordanian playwright and director, and founder of a popular theatre.

"On one occasion, we were performing in an Arab country. The show attracted huge audiences, in excess of 4,000, but was stopped on the third day by local authorities who claimed that it might provoke disorder and political problems," he said.

Mr. Abdul Rahman hoped that the Arab theatre movement had greater freedom to promote cultural aesthetics and called upon movements to work together to make up for the lack of support and encouragement.

Muri al Halian, an actor from the Emirates, said that for Arab theatre to progress, there should be greater interaction between theatre associations and the media.

Reprinted from Gulf News

Hale-Bopp Comet visible in Middle East

AMMAN (J.T.) — Astronomy enthusiasts are raising their eyes to the sky to witness the brightest comet visible to the naked eye in 25 years.

The Hale-Bopp Comet, named after the two American amateur astronomers, who first espied the celestial body in July 1995, can be seen most clearly in the northern regions of the world and is currently visible in the Middle East in the northeast sky, nightly after 2 a.m.

According to Hani Dalee, a founding member of the Jordan Astronomical Society (JAS), after the 15th of this month Hale-Bopp will become visible between 8 p.m. and dawn.

He said that the comet consists of ice as well as some solid gases, and rock. As the comet nears the sun it develops a long tail, trailing from its head which points away from the sun due to radiation pressure.

"By the beginning of April, the comet will reach its maximum brightness and its tail," Mr. Dalee said.

He added that the JAS, founded in 1987 by Abdul Rahim Bader and financially supported by the Haya Cultural Centre, will be organising a camp out in Al Azraq desert in April for enthusiasts to observe the comet.

A comet is defined by scientists as a nebulous celestial body which consists of a fuzzy head, surrounding a bright nucleus.

"This comet is even brighter than Haley's comet, which appeared in 1986 and instigated great excitement amongst astronomy enthusiasts worldwide," Mr. Dalee concluded.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Minister affirms press role in performance evaluations

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Social Development Hammad Abu Jamous Friday underlined the press role in evaluating civil servants' performances. He maintained that people will soon start to notice improvements in the performance of the ministry staff. Mr. Abu Jamous affirmed that he has instructed directors of social development departments and offices to provide the press, upon the latter's request, with any and all information regarding social welfare, family and children's services, special education and social defence.

CSC president meets with Palestinian counterpart

AMMAN (Petra) — Civil Service Commission (CSC) President Abdullah Elayyan Thursday received a Palestinian delegation, headed by President of the Palestinian Civil Service Commission Jaber Shihadeh. The group discussed cooperation between the two commissions in such areas as joint training and expert exchanges. The two officials also discussed ways to overcome difficulties encountered by the Palestinian commission in implementing CSC laws and regulations.

Earthquake supplies delivered to Iran

TEHRAN (Petra) — In implementation of His Majesty King Hussein's directives to send humanitarian aid to the earthquake-hit Iranian Governorate of Erdabil, a Royal Jordanian (RJ) air force plane carrying 18 tonnes of medicine, medical supplies, 1,000 tents and 2,000 blankets donated by the Hashemite Charity Organisation landed yesterday in Tehran.

Bahrain agrees to employ Jordanian doctors — minister

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Health Aref Bataineh Friday said the Manama government has agreed to hire Jordanian doctors from various medical specialisations to work in Bahrain.

Returning to Amman Friday from working visits to both Bahrain and Iran, Dr. Bataineh said that he met with senior officials to discuss bilateral cooperation in the health field.

Dr. Bataineh stated that he discussed developments in the Middle East peace process and auxiliary issues with Bahraini leader Sheikh Issa Ben Salman and the two reviewed the current stalemate.

The minister also met with his Bahraini counterpart Faisal Mousawi to discuss enhancing bilateral relations and contracting Jordanian doctors.

Drs. Bataineh and Mousawi signed a memorandum of understanding which will serve as an integrated health protocol; a full protocol will be signed later.

While in Iran, Dr. Bataineh met with Iranian Vice President Hassan Habibi and conveyed to him messages from His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti.

The minister also visited several Iranian health institutions and was particularly interested in the country's experience in primary health care.

The minister agreed with the health authorities there to enrol Jordanian healthcare workers, through the World Health Organisation (WHO), in primary health care training courses in the Islamic republic.

What's Going On

CONCERT

* Concert by the National Music Conservatory band at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by Paris-based Syrian artist Ziad Dalloul at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 3. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

* Sculptures by Zaki Sallam at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 687598), until March 15.

Jordan Times Facsimile #696183

Albanian protestors ignore truce, refuse to surrender arms

TIRANA, (AFP) — Armed protestors in southern Albania rejected a 48-hour government ceasefire and amnesty plan, vowing to hold onto their weapons, as an EU delegation arrived in the capital to press for dialogue.

Mobs were said to be controlling a 120-kilometre stretch of the coastal road between two key southern hotspots, the port of Vlore and the Adriatic beach resort of Sarande, near the Greek border.

Two people, a mother and a son, were shot dead in the last 24 hours in Vlore, bringing to 27 the number of people killed in a week of rioting there that saw anti-government insurgents loot army barracks, seize weapons and attack police barracks.

But Vlore was reported to be calm at midday Friday.

Government officials have conceded that the situation in Vlore, Sarande and other southern points is out of control.

But protestors were suspicious of the government's pledge to halt offensive military operation for 48 hours, from 0:00 a.m. (0500 GMT) Friday.

"We are afraid of repression once we surrender our weapons. The army is still surrounding the city," said one Vlore resident reached by telephone.

The government, under increasing international pressure to open dialogue with the opposition, also offered an amnesty to protestors who turn in stolen arms except those who had committed "crimes."

A state of emergency was declared Sunday after the rioting flared, ignited by nearly two months of tension over the collapse of Pyramid investment schemes in which thousands of Albanians lost their life's savings.

Insurgents in Sarande also warned they would not surrender weapons until a "new legitimate government" is in place.

"We want a peaceful solution to the conflict, early elections, the resignation of President (Sali) Berisha and the formation of a government of technocrats," said a man who identified himself as Colonel Tzavar, military leader of rebels in Sarande.

Elsewhere, rebels set up heavy weapons, including cannons and mortars, on the edge of two others towns, Memaliaj and Tepelena.

Tanks and anti-aircraft weapons were seized from the Albanian army in both towns, but in the chaos a 13-year-old child was killed Thursday by a burst of fire from an automatic weapon. The incident prompted both towns to urge all children holding weapons to turn them in, and former officers were reportedly working alongside protestors to get control over the weapons.

The European Union delegation led by Foreign Minister Hans Van Mierlo of the Netherlands was to stay just a few hours. Its arrival came after have international pressure on the conservative government in Tirana to renew dialogue with the opposition to end the crisis.

Berisha held an unprecedented, five-hour meeting with all political parties Thursday — the first of its kind since Berisha's Democratic Party won a broad majority in parliament in the last poll in May 1996 that was tainted by fraud allegations and boycotted by the opposition.

But opposition leaders were sceptical afterwards. Pandeli Majko, executive secretary of the ex-Communist Socialists, dismissed the ceasefire as only "a 48-hour interruption of the bloodbath."

"If this pause is not coupled with other measures, notably a coalition government and early elections, then there is no way to calm down the situation, which will only worsen," he said.

Mr. Majko also denied that Berisha had offered, at Thursday's meeting, to hold new elections, despite a statement to this effect by Greek Prime Minister Costa Simitis.

Fatos Lubonja, a leader of a seven-member opposition umbrella group called the forum for democracy, accused Mr. Berisha of having used the opposition to try to brush off some of the international pressure.

Albania's prime minister, Aleksander Meksi, and his cabinet resigned last week in a bid to end the crisis and consultation are underway on forming a new government.

Protestors and the opposition have accused the government of colluding with the Pyramid schemes, which held out a get-rich-quick hope in what is Europe's poorest country.

But another opposition leader, Prec Zogaj, leader of the Democratic Alliance which is part of the forum, warned Friday that the protestors' orginal demands — compensation for lost life savings and fresh elections — remain intact.

A Council of Europe delegation has been in Albania since Thursday, and a team from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is also in the country to prepare a full-blown mission by an OSCE fact-finding delegation in the next few days.



Albanian rebels man a gunboat seized a few days ago by armed rebels in an Albanian naval base in the town of Sarande. About 400 insurgents carried assault rifles and had dug in with anti-aircraft guns and heavy machineguns to set up a defence line at the entrance of the town (Reuter photo)

China says N. Korean interests must play part in defector case

BEIJING, (AFP) — China revealed the depth of the political battle over North Korean defector Hwang Jang-Yop Friday by warning that Pyongyang's interests must play a part in solving the impasse.

"China will follow the international law ... to solve this problem, but at the same time we will take in the need to maintain peace and stability on the Korean peninsula," Foreign Minister Qian Qichen said.

"Right now we hope all parties concerned will adopt a cool-headed attitude so as to solve this problem as soon as possible," he told a media briefing.

China was thrown into the international limelight in early February when Mr. Hwang, North Korea's top ideologue, defected to the South Korean embassy in Beijing.

Mr. Hwang remains holed up inside the building, with Pyongyang pressurising Beijing to prevent him travelling to Seoul.

In Seoul Friday Foreign Ministry Director General Ryu Kwang-Sok said a major problem for China had been the "outrage" triggered in North Korea by a South Korean newspaper report linked to Mr. Hwang.

The report by the Joong Ang daily quoted Mr. Hwang as telling an unnamed Japanese friend that the late North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung had died of a heart attack suffered after an argument with his son.

The story "triggered a major blockade" to the talks, Mr. Ryu told journalists, adding that Seoul had verified that neither Mr. Hwang nor Kim Duk-Hong, the aide holed up in the embassy with Mr. Hwang, had told any such story to the Japanese media.

Negotiations were now going smoothly, but were expected to take some time, Mr. Ryu said.

China is bound by international law to recognise Mr. Hwang's effective defection to the South and it has steadily increased security round the building to include six armoured personnel carriers, riot police, armed soldiers and a water cannon.

A series of recovery attempts by North Korean agents culminated in a night time commando assault on the building on Feb. 27.

"Sometimes incidents happen on the Korean peninsula...and China hopes these incidents and problems can be resolved in a way that will not affect peace and stability on the Korean peninsula," Mr. Qian said.

China was North Korea's brother-in-arms during the 1950-53 Korean War, but has since established diplomatic relations with South Korea.

It is a member of the four-party peace talks proposal that would involve the two Koreas and the United States, but Mr. Qian warned that it was impossible to predict when such a peace mechanism could be set up.

"It is still hard to say whether this problem can be resolved in the forseeable future," he said.

China calls for unity in Muslim Xinjiang after separatist bombings

BEIJING, (R) — China has hinted at ethnic unrest in Muslim Xinjiang as a senior official called for unity in the western region that was rocked by separatist bomb attacks last week.

"Xinjiang ...must further improve ethnic unity, protect social stability and do a better job of building up Xinjiang," the official People's Daily quoted Vice-Premier Li Lanqing as saying.

Mr. Li made no direct reference to the series of deadly bombings in Xinjiang's capital Urumqi on Feb. 25, the day Beijing held funeral rites for late leader Deng Xiaoping.

The Chinese vice-premier's remarks to Xinjiang delegates at the National People's Congress, or parliament, were one of the few signs in the national media that the region had once again been shaken by ethnic unrest.

Chinese police have arrested at least 20 ethnic Uighurs in Urumqi and Yining near Xinjiang's border with Kazakhstan, exiled Uighur nationalists said from the Kazakh capital of Almaty.

"At least 20 ethnic Uighurs have been arrested ...but the real number may be even higher because we have no information whether new arrests took place last night," Kakharman Khozhamberdi, head of a local Uighur association, told Reuters in Almaty.

Officials and residents in Urumqi and Yining, contacted by telephone from Beijing, were unaware of the total number of people arrested in the attacks.

Three bombs hidden on public buses blew up within minutes of each other in Urumqi on Feb. 25 in an apparently coordinated attack. A fourth bomb failed to explode.

The Xinjiang Daily said Wednesday that authorities had arrested several people suspected of planting bombs and of selling detonators used in the attacks that killed nine people and wounded 74.

Police were interrogating the suspects and had launched a manhunt for others still at large, the regional newspaper said.

China's official media outside the Muslim region ignored the incident.

Muslim separatists say they want to set up an independent "East Turkestan" in Xinjiang, a region that is home to many Turkic-speaking people such as the Uighur ethnic minority.

Exiled Uighur nationalists have claimed responsibility for the latest attacks.

Parliament's Vice-Chairman Wang Hanbin Thursday introduced revisions to China's criminal law setting stiffer punishment for stirring up ethnic hatred and making it a capital crime to use race or religion to endanger state security.

"People in some places are stirring up hatred among ethnic groups in an attempt to undermine unity among them," Mr. Wang told parliament.

In early February, an anti-Chinese riot erupted in Yining, about 50 kilometres from Xinjiang's border with Kazakhstan. Chinese officials said nine people were killed.

The riot was one of the largest, most violent demonstrations for independence in Xinjiang since the 1949 Communist takeover.

Beijing, unnerved by the spectre of turmoil along its borders, had put the Lanzhou military region, which oversees Xinjiang, on alert against further unrest, Hong Kong's Sing Tao daily newspaper said Wednesday.

Japan guru's trial runs aground

TOKYO, (R) — Japan's "trial of the century" ran aground when court-appointed lawyers defending the guru of a doomsday cult accused of the Tokyo subway gassing tendered their resignations.

"Our biggest concern is that the court is trying to railroad through the trial on the basis of society's presupposition that (Shoko) Asahara is guilty," said Osamu Watanabe, chief of the 12 lawyers appointed to defend Mr. Asahara by the Tokyo District Court.

"We can no longer fulfil our responsible roles as attorneys because the court has degraded the trial to a ceremony. We have no intention of sitting in court just as mere decoration," Mr. Watanabe told a news conference after submitting the team's resignation.

It was not clear if the Tokyo District Court would accept the resignations. A court spokesman confirmed the document was in the hands of court officials but refused further comment.

Mr. Watanabe said court officials had asked for talks with his team, which were expected to start next week.

Mr. Watanabe's team was appointed last year to defend Mr. Asahara, leader of the Aum Shinri Kyo (Supreme Truth Sect) who is accused of the March 1995 subway nerve gas attack, which killed 12 people and harmed 6,000 others.

Mr. Asahara also faces 16 other charges ranging from murder to drugs and weapons production.

The maximum penalty for a single murder conviction is death by hanging.

Dubbed the "trial of the century" by the Japanese media, Mr. Asahara's defence has been dogged by controversy since he fired his lawyer on the eve of the opening session in October 1995.

Murder trials in Japan cannot be held without the presence of the defendant's lawyer.

Mandela seeks Malaysia's help to improve lot of black majority

KUALA LUMPUR, (AFP) — South African President Nelson Mandela Friday sought multi-racial Malaysia's help in implementing economic reforms to improve the lot of his country's impoverished black majority.

Mr. Mandela told Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad in an hour long meeting here that South Africa wanted to learn from Malaysia's success in enhancing the status of its ethnic Malay majority, known as the "Bumiputras."

"South Africa requested for assistance in human resource development, especially in skills training, management training and entrepreneurship," Malaysian Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told reporters.

"Their policy is to give opportunity and encouragement to the black majority to enter the private sector and Malaysia's experience is vital to them."

Mr. Mandela arrived Thursday for his first state visit to Malaysia, the final leg of a four-nation swing that earlier took him to the Philippines, Brunei and Singapore.

This was Mr. Mandela's second official meeting with Mr. Mahathir, who visited South Africa in August 1995. Mr. Mahathir has been a vocal supporter of Mr. Mandela and has promised help in developing post-apartheid South Africa.

Mr Mahathir told Mr. Mandela Malaysia was ready to share its experience and help create more South African Bumiputra-type entrepreneurs to strengthen their economy, Mr. Abdullah said.

Malaysia accords preferential treatment to ethnic Malays to bridge the wealth gap between them and the more prosperous ethnic Chinese, who constitute a third of its 20-million population. Malays make up more than half, while ethnic Indians and others constitute the rest.

The so-called new economic policy implemented in 1970 after bloody ethnic riots provides for such measures as special lending policies, university admission quotas and a 30-per cent equity allocation in listed companies for Bumiputras.

Malaysian officials say the pro-Bumiputra policy has improved the lot of Malays and eased ethnic tensions, but others, including neighbouring Chinese-dominated Singapore, frown upon the practice, saying merit should come above race.

In the talks with Mr. Mahathir, Mr. Mandela called for more joint ventures between Malaysian and South African firms, saying Malaysia's experience was needed to help modernise South Africa's telecommunication and shipping sectors.

Mr. Mandela assured Mr. Mahathir the political situation in South Africa would remain stable and that the high crime rate had declined sharply.

Mr. Mahathir urged South Africa to reduce tariffs on palm oil, which stands at 400 rand ($90) a tonne, compared to 170 rand for soya bean oil. He proposed that the tariff should be comparable with those for other edible oils.

After the talks, Malaysian and South African ministers signed an agreement granting each other most-favoured-nation (MFN) trading status, which extends benefits accorded other nations, such as customs duties and trade formalities, as well as a maritime accord.

The two countries established a joint committee to discuss measures to enhance trade, which reached $544 million in 1996, up 14.3 per cent from 1995, with Malaysia enjoying a slight surplus.

South Africa is Malaysia's chief trading partner in Africa, while Malaysia is the top south East Asian investor in South Africa, with investments now exceeding $3 billion .

The two leaders agreed to push for greater engagement between ASEAN and the South African Development Council (SADC), which have a combined population of 600 million people.

Mr. Mandela, accompanied during the tour by Companion Graca Machel, is scheduled to return to Pretoria Monday after a weekend break at Malaysia's northeastern Langkawi Island resort.

Nepal premier to quit as government loses vote

KATHMANDU, (R) — Nepal's Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has said he would resign after his 17-month-old centre-right coalition lost a crucial parliamentary vote of confidence.

"I accept the verdict gracefully and I will resign," Mr. Deuba told Reuters after the vote. Asked when he will resign, he said: "I will have to check whether to personally go to the King (Birendra) or if I can send my resignation," he said.

Mr. Deuba's government received 101 votes against a required minimum of 103 during voting on the motion, which he himself had moved to demonstrate the coalition's majority in the 205-seat lower house of parliament.

Lawmakers said two of Mr. Deuba's Nepali Congress Party lawmakers were not present for the voting Thursday. This could not be officially confirmed.

The lawmakers said the Nepali Congress was holding a meeting of its deputies at Mr. Deuba's official residence. The Congress could try to form a new government under a new party leader, they said.

The alternative would be for the opposition United Marxist Leninist (UML) party to attempt to form a new government.

The Communist UML had formed a minority government after elections in November 1994 threw up a fragmented parliament.

But it was defeated in September 1995, when Mr. Deuba assumed power by cobbling together a three-party coalition with crucial support from the Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP).

Madhav Kumar Nepal, general secretary of the UML, said his party's standing committee was scheduled to meet later Thursday. "We will discuss the possibility of a new government with other major parties," he said. He gave no details.

Ninety-two MPs voted against the motion, but the higher number of votes won by Mr. Deuba was not enough as the constitution requires the government to prove a majority in the total strength of the house.

Pakistan confirms political rendezvous with India in Delhi

ISLAMABAD, (AFP) — Pakistan Friday confirmed that four days of talks would start in New Delhi this month — more than three years after contacts with India were suspended.

The meeting will involve Pakistani Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad and his Indian counterpart Salman Haider, a Foreign Ministry announcement said

"Pursuant to the exchange of letters between prime ministers of Pakistan and India it has been decided that the foreign secretaries of the two countries will meet in New Delhi from March 28 to 31," it said.

India's Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda Thursday extended a "hand of friendship" to Pakistan and said official talks between the South Asian rivals would improve relations.

Pakistan and India have fought three wars since their independence in 1947, two of them over the former Himalayan kingdom of Kashmir, now divided between the two. The dialogue follows a change of government in Pakistan.

Pakistan's new Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, replying to a congratulatory message from Mr. Deve Gowda after taking office on Feb. 17, proposed the foreign secretaries' meet to pave the way for a summit.

Conciliatory signals from the two capitals came amid groging U.S. interest in a thaw in traditionally hostile Indo-Pakistan relations.

The brief Pakistani announcement here gave no hint on agenda of the talks though.

Mr. Sharif's letter indicated a softer line as it did not insist that Kashmir top the agenda, as Pakistan has done in the past.

He did say though that "without some progress" over the "core" issue it would be "difficult to initiate meaningful cooperation in economic and cultural fields."

There was no immediate official reaction in Pakistan to a tough statement Wednesday by India's Defence Minister Mulayam Singh who renewed claims to the northern third of Kashmir held by Pakistan.

Indian leaders have insisted the talks focus on trade, which now stands at a meagre $100 million annually, though India's ambassador in Islamabad, Satish Chandra, said informal trade was 10 times higher, mostly through smuggling.

Bonn seeks energy consensus after nuclear showdown

BONN (R) — The German government has signalled readiness for energy talks with the opposition Social Democrats (SPD), a day after a violent showdown between anti-nuclear activists and riot police in northern Germany.

Environment Minister Angela Merkel said she thought it would be possible to reach a consensus with the SPD on some issues, but ruled out the party's proposal for a ban on transporting nuclear waste as "unrealistic."

SPD environment spokesman Michael Mueller told a news conference in Bonn his party was prepared for energy talks but would not swerve from its strict anti-nuclear policy and proposals for a switch to alternative energy sources.

Their comments followed bitter clashes Wednesday as a nuclear waste shipment was delivered to Gorleben dump.

The operation succeeded, but only thanks to Germany's biggest and costliest post-war security operation, involving 30,000 police and border guards nationwide.

Environmentalists said three protesters were badly injured and a further 300 slightly hurt in clashes with police. Officials said of 9,000 police and 5,000 border guards deployed around Gorleben two had been badly injured and 94 slightly hurt.

The scale of the security operation led many commentators to wonder whether Germany's commitment to nuclear power was worth the effort. But the government said it cannot put the nuclear genie back in the bottle.

"We will not be able to put an end to these (nuclear waste) shipments," Ms. Merkel told German radio in an interview.

"But I believe a consensus at least between the big parties is possible and therefore I will press harder than ever for such energy talks...so that this row can be laid to rest."

Ms. Merkel said talks would include SPD proposals to put nuclear waste dumps in southern states such as Bavaria and Baden-Wuerttemberg, where a high proportion of Germany's nuclear power plants are located.

Energy talks between members of Chancello. Helmut Kohl's coalition government and the SPD have collapsed repeatedly in the past, most recently two years ago when the first waste shipment was sent to Gorleben.

One of the chief sticking points was nuclear energy, which the government wants to keep and the SPD wants phased out.

Such talks would not include the Greens Party — the political mentors for Germany's many environmental groups — who along with the SPD defended the protests as an expression of widespread opposition to nuclear energy.

Gorleben is Germany's main medium-term nuclear waste storage facility and a permanent dump is also planned there.

The SPD state government in Lower Saxony, responsible for overseeing the dump and ensuring the safety of nuclear waste consignments, is anxious the nuclear waste burden be shared.

The state's interior minister, Gerhard Glogowski, renewed his demands for southern states to store their own waste in atomic power stations, saying his state simply could not go on footing the bill for such massive police operations every year.

"It is absurd that the waste is produced in southern Germany and sent up (to be stored) here," he told German radio.



Zairean rebels patrol the streets of Kindu after they swept through the town last weekend. The rebels are now said to be closing in on Zaire's third largest town, Kisangani, and rejected a call by Zaire's government for international monitors to be sent to the eastern part of the country (Reuter photo)

Zairean rebels object to international monitors

KINDU, Zaire (R) — Rebels rejected Thursday a call by Zaire's government, under heavy pressure from rebel advances, for international monitors to be sent to east Zaire.

The U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) said two planes over the east spotted Rwandan refugees arriving in Ubundu town apparently from Tingi Tingi camp, overrun by rebels on Feb. 28.

"International monitors could become an interposition force and it would just result once again in the protection of (President) Mobutu Sese Seko by his foreign friends," the rebels' justice minister Mwenze Kongolo told Reuters in Kindu.

Mr. Mobutu, 66, seized power in Zaire in 1965 but is now in Europe where he had surgery for prostate cancer last August.

Kinshasa Wednesday abruptly urged the United Nations to send in monitors to oversee a withdrawal of foreign troops and implementation of a U.N. peace plan it previously dismissed as too timid.

Kinshasa accuses neighbouring Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi of sending troops to Zaire to fight alongside rebels of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) closing in on the northeastern capital of Kisangani.

All three countries, and the rebels, deny the accusations.

"The only foreign troops fighting in this war are the (government's) mercenaries and (former) Rwandan soldiers...There is nothing to monitor on this side, we have no foreign assistance," Mr. Mwenze said.

Kenya said Thursday it would host a summit on the conflict in eastern Zaire on March 19 but rebel leader Laurent Kabila was not invited.

Kenyan Foreign Ministry spokesman David Kikaya said Kenya had asked Zaire's ailing president to attend the one-day talks with South Africa's Nelson Mandela and five other African heads of state.

"The purpose of the summit is to advance the search for peace and a lasting solution in eastern Zaire," Mr. Kikaya told Reuters in Nairoubi.

The rebels have captured a stretch of the mineral-rich east more than 1,000 kilometres long and in places more than 300 kilometres wide since starting their rebellion in October.

Their posts were being flooded by youths who wanted to enlist in forces closing in on the northeastern capital of Kisangani. Would-be recruits turning up at rebel posts in Kindu, which fell to the rebels Sunday, were told to leave their names and return when a recruitment programme was organised locally.

In Nairobi, a WFP spokeswoman said planes ferrying food to the town of Punia confirmed Rwandan Hutu refugees were arriving in Ubundu, 130 kilometres northwest of Tingi Tingi and 100 kilometres south of the northeastern capital of Kisangani.

Some 170,000 refugees fled from Tingi Tingi last Friday.

She said aid agencies hoped to send in a mission by plane Friday but flying in food might be hard as Ubundu airstrip was last used in 1963 though it was rehabilitated eight months ago.

Aid workers on flights Wednesday saw Zairean troops at a crossroads diverting several thousand Rwandan Hutu refugees away from Kisangani and towards Ubundu. They also said Punia was full of displaced Zaireans and some 2,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees.

"We will not harm the refugees and we have promised the international community total access to them so that they will be able to return to their homes," Mr. Mwenze said.

Kinshasa has accused the rebels of killing 25,000 civilians after overrunning Tingi Tingi, but there was no confirmation.

The rebels resist international pressure for a ceasefire and say the only thing to be negotiated in any face-to-face talks between their leader and Mr. Mobutu is when he will stand down.

"For the good of the country Mobutu has to go, and there is no way that we could ever accept any power-sharing arrangement that would give him the chance to betray us as he has betrayed so many people in the past," Mr. Mwenze said.

In Geneva, the outgoing U.N. human rights chief appealed to donors to fund sending observers to investigate reports of alleged massacres of Rwandan Hutu refugees by rebels.

A U.N. statement said Jose Ayala Lasso was deeply concerned by reports from Zairean human rights groups alleging the existence of mass graves near camps which sheltered Rwandan Hutu refugees and were overrun by rebels late in 1996.

Meanwhile, soldiers of the regular Zairean army (FAZ), often unpaid, poorly equipped and demoralised, have in a string of towns voluntarily laid down their arms and asked to join the rebels.

The rebels are cautious, given the soldiers' ferocious reputation for indiscipline, and have refused for the most part to recruit former army soldiers immediately, sending them off instead for "re-education."

By contrast with the army, which long gained itself renown for robbing, looting and terrorising the local population, the rebels here show a strict discipline that appears to come down from the most senior levels of command.

The rebels have developed guerrilla tactics, mortaring a town to panic the army and then entering by night.

Entering the towns, they have been proclaimed as "liberators," appointing administrators and then continuing on elsewhere.

As with recruits, however, the rebels are managing to pick up some armaments from those left behind by the Zairean army. At Kindu, the army left dozens of assault rifles, rockets and ammunition.

Human clones could follow soon, scientists warn

LONDON, (R) — The scientists who created Dolly the sheep, the world's first adult clone, said Thursday the developments could be applied to human cloning soon, and there should be international laws preventing such work.

"If you really wanted to do it it could be done," said Ian Wilmut, the chief scientist at Scotland's Roslin Institute where the sheep experiment was carried out.

News that a sheep had been cloned using a cell from an adult sheep shocked the world and prompted a flurry of soul-searching about whether the technology was morally acceptable.

This week U.S. President Bill Clinton banned federal funding of cloning and German research Minister Juergen Ruettgers called for a worldwide ban on cloning human beings.

Danish scientists trying to produce cloned cattle said Wednesday they were halting experiments pending a full debate.

The scientists behind the technique, developed at the Roslin Institute and PPL Therapeutics Plc, told British parliamentarians Thursday work with human eggs would be "distressing" and "offensive."

Dr. Wilmut said that if scientists were prepared to take the "distressing" step of working with 1,000 human eggs, the size of the experiment that produced the sheep breakthrough, "you might expect to make significant progress in one or two years."

But he added: "It is the unanimous view of the group within the institute and within the company that we would find this sort of work with human embryos offensive.

"We could see no clinical reason why you would wish to make a copy of a person and we are pleased that it is already illegal in this country so we would support wholeheartedly the idea of (international) prohibition in as effective a way as possible."

Dr. Wilmut's testimony went directly against Ruth Deech of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, which regulates fertility research, who said Wednesday she could see circumstances under which cloning people would be desirable.

She told the same committee that, for example, people at risk of having a baby with certain rare genetic disorders could instead be cloned, leaving the baby free of the defect.

Ms. Deech said there was no need for a blanket prohibition on human cloning but perhaps the law needed "tweaking" to make sure experiments were properly controlled.

But the scientists from PPL and the Roslin Institute defended their work with animals, saying it held out the prospect of cheaper food and new remedies for genetic diseases.

The Roslin and PPL researchers say cloning is a natural outgrowth of their research into animal breeding and the production of medicines from animal blood and milk.

Belgium wakes up to horror of new child murder

BRUSSELS, (R) — Belgium awoke Thursday to the horror of another child murder — that of a nine-year-old girl missing since August 1992.

The remains of Loubna Benaissa were found late Wednesday in a crate of car parts in the cellar of a garage just metres from her home in central Brussels.

The cause of death was not immediately known, but a convicted sex offender whose family owned the garage was placed under arrest along with three other men.

Patrick Derochette, 33, who received a suspended sentence in 1984 for child molesting, was being questioned by a special police unit set up last summer following the discovery of children murdered by another paedophile gang.

No links have yet been established between the two groups.

"Although we do not yet have final scientific evidence, we are very certain we have found the body of Loubna Benaissa," Michel Bourlet, the unit's chief investigator, told a news conference.

"There are no words to describe the horror which inspires such (cowardly) acts," Belgian Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene said in a statement, summing up the nation's feelings.

"This news brings to an end the painful uncertainty for (Benaissa's) family, which has become a symbol of courage and tenacity for many of our citizens," Mr. Dehaene added.

Wednesday's discovery of the putrefied body in the inner suburb of Ixelles reopened Belgium's grim dossier of child abuse and murder.

The investigation into Benaissa's disappearance was marked by allegations of bungling by authorities, accused of not taking the case seriously, failing to appoint an investigating judge and closing the file on her after just two years.

Sri Lanka troops go on alert as camp attack toll nears 300

COLOMBO, (AFP) — Security forces were placed on red alert Friday for more guerrilla attacks as the death toll rose to 290 in a devastating Tamil Tiger assault in eastern Sri Lanka, officials said.

The authorities prepared for 89 funerals of soldiers killed in the pre-dawn raid on the Vavunativu army camp in the district of Batticaloa, military sources said.

There were reports of several soldiers missing after the devastating attack.

However, the Defence Ministry placed army losses at 65 dead and said more than 200 Tigers were killed 120 wounded in a ferocious counter attack. The rebels also left behind three vehicles and their guns, the ministry said.

"We have placed all military establishments in the east on maximum alert because the Tigers can strike against, especially against soft targets like isolated camps and villages," a defence official said.

The military claims of high Tiger casualties went unchallenged by the guerrillas who made no mention of the Vavunativu attack in a daily statement issued from their London office Friday morning.

However, the LTTE's clandestine Voice of Tigers radio said Friday that they lost seven suicide cadres during another attack on the neighbouring district of Trincomalee where they destroyed a Chinese-built Y-12 aircraft.

The Tiger radio said the army suffered "heavy" casualties in the camp attack in the district of Batticaloa but gave no details of either their own losses or those of the security forces.

Thursday's fierce fighting ended a two-month lull in major rebel attacks in the eastern province and came barely two weeks after troops wrested control over a key highway from the rebels in the north-west.

Security forces captured a 77-kilometre highway located within rebel-held territory in the north-west Mannar district last month without much fighting.

Analysts said it was now clear that the rebels had tactically withdrawn from the army advance to minimise their losses and launch a spectacular assault in the east of the country.

Diplomats said Thursday's violence underscored the problems of manpower faced by government forces who are unable to fight both in the north and the east of the country at the same time.

The Tigers too were unable to face up to the military in the north as well as in the east because of the same problem of poor manpower.

The devastating attack on the army was a double blow to the government which is facing a crucial mid-term popularity test with the March 21 local council elections.

The attack on the air force base compounded a series of losses suffered by them this year. Two MI-17 helicopters collided last week while an Antanov-32 transport plane crashed during take off last month.

In January, the air force lost a Y-12 plane, an Israeli-built Kfir supersonic jet and a small remote-control spy plane.

Tiger guerrillas are leading a campaign for independence in the island's northern and eastern regions where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated.

Russian Duma backs Chechenya amnesties

MOSCOW (Agencies) — The Russian Duma, the lower house of parliament, Friday voted through an amnesty for those accused of warcrimes during the conflict in Chechenya.

The 235-39 vote will amnesty combattants on both sides accused of crimes during the conflict, which lastad from December 1994 until the peace treaty signed last August. Eighteen deputies abstained in the vote.

The resolution halts any legal action which may already be underway in the courts.

Russian military deserters are covered by the legislation, along with many Chechens who fought against Russian troops.

But the amnesty does not cover the Chechen separatists who took part in the mass hostage-taking raids on Budennovsk in June 1995 and Pervomaiskaya in Dagestan in January last year — described as terrorist acts by Russian legislators.

The raids, which resulted in heavy casualties, were led by field commanders Shamil Basayev and Salman Raduyev, respectively.

Nor does it cover "the soldiers and employees of the Interior Ministry who stole arms and who sold them to participants in the conflict as well as those who stole money destined for the reconstruction of Chechenya," the text said.

These "dangerous recidivist criminals as well as foreign citizens and people without citizenship" are excluded from the amnesty.

Deputies had given their agreement in principle for the resolution in early February.

President Boris Yeltsin, touching only briefly on one of the big problems facing Russia in his state of the nation speech, cautioned Thursday against rushing negotiations with Chechenya.

"Talks are continuing. Step by step confidence is being restored. But it is easy to destroy it and for this reason it is dangerous to artificially speed up the negotiating process," Mr. Yeltsin said in his annual address to members of parliament.

His comments contrasted with suggestions by negotiators from both sides last Sunday that Russia and Chechenya might soon sign a formal peace declaration after their almost two-year conflict which ended last August.

Under the August peace deal, the two sides agreed to defer for five years a decision on Chechenya's political status, the issue at the root of their conflict.

Chechenya's separatist leaders still demand full independence but Moscow has ruled this out.

Yeltsin returns to the helm vowing order, cabinet changes

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin, looking healthy and back in fighting form after illness, vowed in his annual state of the nation speech to restore order in Russia and promised sweeping changes in his government.

In his longest and most important address since he had heart surgery in November, Mr. Yeltsin pledged to start a crusade against corruption, turn around the economy and deny the opposition the chance to force constitutional changes to weaken his powers.

"Enough is enough... The time has come to restore order and I will do that," Mr. Yeltsin, 66, said in a clear and confident voice in a 25-minute speech which received a polite standing ovation from members of parliament gathered in the Kremlin.

"The structure and composition of the government must be changed. Energetic and competent people will come...And I will announce these changes in the coming days."

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin accepted Mr. Yeltsin's criticisms of the government at a cabinet meeting after the speech. He did not announce any immediate personnel changes but said a major reshuffle was on the way.

"The time has come to concentrate on the most essential questions — to change the style of the government's work, its structure and personal composition. We will act decisively and systematically," Mr. Chernomyrdin said.

Mr. Yeltsin's overall aim was to show he is firmly back in charge after spending most of the last eight months — and his entire second presidential term so far — out of the Kremlin with heart problems and then pneumonia.

Looking thinner than before his illness but standing firmly on his feet, he passed the health test with flying colours.

But his political opponents said his speech repeated old, unfulfilled promises and offered no new recipes for solving the problems facing the nuclear power of almost 150 million people. They accused him of trying to shift the blame onto others.

"It was just a set of declarations, without any real decisions to back it...Just promises and petty threats," Gennady Zyuganov, leader of the main opposition Communist Party, said.

Mr. Yeltsin faces many more tests of his long-term health, and his authority may soon be tested by a day of nationwide strikes planned for March 27 over unpaid wages.

He pulled no punches in criticising his government's failure to pay wages and pensions on time and painted a gloomy picture of Russia — suggesting that problems only pile up without him.

"Russia has entered the year of 1997 with a heavy burden of problems. The situation in the country is extremely difficult," he said.

But he hoped for a brighter future, the key to which was tight budgetary discipline and tax reforms to boost the economy.

"In 2000 Russia will elect a new president. I want to pass on to my successor a country with a dynamically growing economy, an effective and fair social protection system, a country whose people look to the future with confidence," he said.

Announcing a new crackdown on crime, something he has tried many times before, he said investigations must go right to the top. "There must be no untouchables," he said.

Also reasserting his authority, he said he would not approve any attempts to amend the constitution. The opposition has demanded constitutional amendments to water down his vast powers and to try to remove him for health reasons.

Mr. Yeltsin did not announce details of his plans for a government shake-up but made clear he would do so soon.

Kremlin sources said Mr. Yeltsin's chief of staff, liberal reformer Anatoly Chubais, could be taken on as Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's first deputy premier to spearhead the crackdown on economic crime and push through reforms.

Mr. Chubais, 41, said after the speech that Mr. Yeltsin had not yet taken a decision on the move. He is regarded as a brilliant administrator but is hated by Communists and nationalists for his earlier role in overseeing privatisation.

The stolid Chernomyrdin looked set to stay on and Mr. Yeltsin offered one grain of hope in the economy, predicting the first growth in gross domestic product since reforms began in 1991.

Mr. Yeltsin acknowledged there were deep problems in the armed forces, whose backing remains important for Kremlin leaders, and said he would announce "fundamental decisions" soon to start reforms, including switching to a non-conscript army.

On foreign policy, Mr. Yeltsin attacked NATO's plans to expand into former Communist-ruled and Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe, calling them an attempt to "squeeze" Russia out of Europe and said the continent would pay a heavy price for them.

One-two punch stuns Major's government in run-up to elections

LONDON (AFP) — John Major's Tory government was on the ropes Friday after a stunning one-two political punch that further darkened its prospects of surviving upcoming general elections.

A new Gallup poll in the Daily Telegraph gave the Labour opposition a crushing 26-point lead — up 11 in a month — over the Conservatives with less than seven weeks remaining to general elections widely expected on May 1.

It showed the point spread widening, not narrowing as the Tories had hoped it would in the approach to elections.

The Labour lead is unprecedented in the history of polling. No governing party in Britain has won an election after being that far behind so close to the vote.

The news Friday came like salt in an open wound after the government was torn 12 hours earlier by damning allegations that Agriculture Minister Douglas Hogg had sat on a report panning hygiene in British abattoirs last year.

Had the report been shared, circulated and publicised, the House of Commons heard, it might have made a difference for 21 people who died of e.coli bacterial meat poisoning in Scotland in the past five months.

The meat hygiene service report, a summary of hundreds of abattoir inspections across the country that had been commissioned by the Agriculture Ministry, was first delivered to the government a year ago.

But it coincided with the breaking scandal over "mad cow" disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) which brought on the European Union embargo on British beef, still in force.

Bill Swann, the government's official veterinary surgeon and editor of the report, contended the document was delayed, cut and sent back for changes, apparently for fear it would erode market confidence.

He said the number of cases of e.coli food poisoning might have been reduced if "hygienic abattoir practices" had been adopted "uniformly across the board."

Scottish Nationalist Party leader Alex Salmond accused Mr. Hogg of an apparent cover-up.

Mr. Hogg, in a statement to the House of Commons, played down the implications of the report, saying it had never been more than "an internal working document to be used by the enforcement authorities."

He said it had been available to any government agency asking, and indicated it had been given to the Scottish Office.

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Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
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University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.
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On threshold of change

EVER SINCE he saw for himself the miserable conditions under which orphaned and other unfortunate children lived here in Amman, His Majesty the King has lost no time not just in making sure that their lot will be improved beyond recognition but also that the root causes of their ordeal will be tackled and addressed once and for all.

The King did not need anybody to tell him that while the immediate problem of 1,100 deprived Jordanian children could be solved, especially since he was going to be personally involved in solving it, the reasons and the conditions that had led to their deprivation had also to be studied, analysed and acted upon. In the wider picture that His Majesty drew, it was inevitable to reach conclusions and make a political determination that in fact is not new to him.

In his letter of appointment to Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti on Feb. 4, 1996, the King spoke of a "white revolution" that was needed here in Jordan to put us on the right path towards the next century and millennium. Yesterday, in his interview with Jordan Television, he did not use the term. But what he said came very close to it.

As His Majesty's words were self-explanatory and his message clear, no-one should left be doubt that the time has finally come to start a new revolutionary process of thought and action, whether on the political, cultural or social fields. King Hussein has already drawn the ideological and historical framework for this process. From his decision to restore democratic parliamentary life in 1989, to taking the position that Jordan took during the Gulf crisis and war in 1990 and 1991, to making peace with Israel in the aftermath of what happened during that sad chapter in Arab history, the King has been steering the country to a position where it can take off in terms of development, progress, stability and economic progress. With the King's noted success in tearing down the psychological and political barriers that stood in the ways towards inter-Arab, regional and international integration, successive Jordanian governments have done what they could to enrich our democratic life and keep us on target in our macro-economic recovery programme.

Prime Minister Kabariti's administration has withstood tremendous pressures in carrying on, not only in those two fields but also in making serious and successful attempts to stamp out corruption and prepare the ground for attracting foreign investment and international support.

But 13 months have not been enough for the prime minister to achieve what he set out to do and everything the King expected from his government. Formidable challenges have stood in the way. He has had too many deputies serving in his Cabinet. And, as His Majesty pointed out last night, a major segment of the political elite did not want him to succeed.

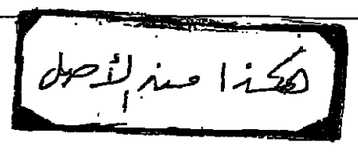
With that in mind, it was difficult for Mr. Kabariti to even begin fighting the bureaucracy, much less wage a white revolution against it and at the same time try to upgrade and modernise the cultural and social value system that we have.

Today, the challenges are no less formidable, but as the King made it clear, we can no longer wait or procrastinate. The prime minister is willing and ready to meet the old-new challenge head on. Besides he has the backing, confidence and trust of the Monarch to do the job. What should help this time is that we are leaving an era and entering another, one that is perhaps more conducive to change and more promising for all. Above all, the political will of the leadership, His Majesty's in particular, is there. And we have to seize the chance.

Work has to begin now. The risks involved in making a start are far less than those evident in sitting on our laurels.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily expressed regret over the U.S. administration's stand with regard to Israel's policies and defiance of the world through its settlement programmes and arrogant behaviour. The American stand was manifested in U.S. officials' statements during President Arafat's visit to Washington, calling on the Palestinians to remain calm and try to avoid an escalation of tension, said the paper in an editorial. Instead of calling on Israel to rescind its decision of building more settlements on Arab land, the U.S. administration served notice that it would veto any resolution by the U.N. Security Council condemning Israel's illegal actions in Palestinian lands, the paper noted. Indeed, Israel's illegal measures in the occupied Arab lands do not only invite worldwide condemnation but also seek to terminate any chances of building confidence between the Arabs and the Israelis, according to the paper which noted that Israel's closure of Palestinian offices in the Arab city of Jerusalem further complicate the situation and clearly expose the Israeli intentions to thwart every chance of reaching a durable settlement with the Arab Nation.+



Jordanian Perspective

By Dr. Musa Keilani

Netanyahu's moves 'predetermining the outcome of the final status negotiations'

FOR ALL practical purposes, Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu has clearly established that he could not be expected to be part of any serious move towards a just and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict. The three decisions that he took along with his hawkish cabinet in the last two weeks demonstrate that his government has no intention whatsoever to recognise the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and continues to be believe in the Jewish state's military might as the answer to the Arabs' quest for their rights in Arab lands. In the bargain, Netanyahu also seems to have thrown caution to the winds.

The three decisions — to build a new Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem, to order the closure of Palestinian offices in the Arab eastern part of the Holy City and to limit the scope of Israeli withdrawal from rural areas of the West Bank — are all part of a wider scenario of total denial of the Palestinians' quest to regain their legitimate political and territorial rights.

The net picture that emerges from the Israeli moves is the blueprint of a master plan to isolate Palestinian towns and communities within the West Bank and deny any independent geographic links among them.

Clearly, the idea is to have small Palestinian townships and villages separated by Israeli-controlled roads and highways as well as settlements so that the very concept of a geographically united Palestinian entity is preempted. That fits in well with Netanyahu's declared objective of granting the Palestinians nothing but the authority to clean their streets in the isolated communities, run their schools and capitals and assume roles that go nothing beyond Israeli municipalities.

What is even worse is the objection that Netanyahu's own Likud Party has raised to what it sees as giving away land to the Palestinians.

For a moment, Netanyahu gave the world an impression that he indeed had enough goodwill towards the Palestinians when he announced his "determination" to go ahead with the scheduled withdrawal from rural areas of the West Bank as agreed upon, in principle, with the Palestinians in the Hebron accord. Coming as it did a few days after his infamous decision to build a Jewish colony on Jabal Abu Ghneim, the impression was that the Israeli prime minister felt the need to make a gesture to soothe Palestinian anger. But, the impression was very short-lived, given that two days later he issued a closure order against Palestinian offices that had been operating in Arab East Jerusalem for years. And then came the decision to withdraw from the rural areas of the West Bank but with strict limitations that definitely change the terms of reference of the basic Oslo agreements.

The cat is clearly out of the bag. Netanyahu is predetermining the outcome of the final status negotiations with the Palestinians, with little heed given to the advice of his ally, the United States, and the warnings issued by Jordan and others in good faith.

It will be the understatement of the century to say that the entire peace process is in danger and, by extension, the hopes of all peace-loving people for stability and security in the Middle East are being eroded.

It will be naive for anyone to assume that things could be put back on track and the Palestinians could resume negotiations with Israel: quite simply, what are they going to negotiate? The extent of their municipal powers? The timings when Palestinian Muslims and Christians could enter Arab East Jerusalem and the parameters that determine the "eligibility" of any Palestinians to enter the Holy City? The scope of their external trade?

With his last two moves, Netanyahu has clearly sent a message to the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab World, as well as the international community, that Israel will determine the nature of the "peace" it wants with the Arabs and no one would have any say in it.

Where do we go from here?

The only course available to the Arabs is to meet at the highest level to chart realistic and firm action to foil the Israeli-dictated nature of peace. If they fail to do so now, then it might be too late.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Israel's settlement policy 'is escalating tension and undermining the peace process'

REVIEWED BY
ELIA NASRALLAH

THE SITUATION in the occupied Arab lands, particularly in the wake of Israel's announcement of plans to build a new settlement on Arab Jerusalem land, attracted most of the papers' attention in the past week. Also given prominence are a number of domestic affairs, especially administrative reform.

A writer for Al Ra'i daily described Benyamin Netanyahu as a deceiver and two-faced liar bragging about his desire to achieve a peaceful settlement with the Arabs and the Palestinians while, in fact, acting totally in the opposite direction.

Sultan Hattab said that this arrogant Israeli prime minister is determined to challenge the Palestinians by building the settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim and, at the same time, he threatens to scrap the peace process with the Palestinians should they declare their independent state.

The writer said that Mr. Netanyahu is misleading the whole world with his double talk about peace while, on the ground, his actions speak otherwise and his defiance of the Palestinians is creating tension and inviting acts of violence.

He said that while lying to the world that he is building houses for the Arabs, Mr. Netanyahu is demolishing the Palestinian's houses, oppressing the Palestinians and maintaining a blockade on their towns and villages.

Instead of embarking on the final status negotiations with the Palestinians, to give them back their lands, the Israelis have declared their intention to build a new settlement on lands they seized from the Arabs in the Jerusalem area, said Taher Adwan, a writer for Al Dustour.

Israel's move to build the Jewish settlement is a step towards escalating tension which could lead to further violence and undermine the peace process, said the writer.

All the Arabs, and not the Palestinians alone, should find a way to reply to this open defiance and Cairo, Amman, Riyadh and the other Arab capitals should act in concert to confront and deal with this challenge at the regional and international levels, called the writer.

We consider Mr. Netanyahu's visit to Cairo, soon after declaring his intention of building the Jewish settlement in the Jerusalem area, as an act of defiance and a proof of Israeli arrogance and disregard of the Arab countries' condemnation of illegal actions and practises, stressed the writer.

He said the Arab League ought to take a firm stand and declare that no Arab state should normalise its relations with Israel before it complies with the requirements of peace.

Hussein Abu Rumman, a writer for Al Ra'i daily, said that the Israelis have chosen to start the battle for Jerusalem at an early stage and before the final status negotiations with the Palestinians are scheduled to start. With their declaration of plans to build a new Jewish settlement on Arab land near Jerusalem, the Israelis have defied the Arab Nation and further exposed Zionism's ambitions in the Arab region and the Jewish state's false pretences about peace, said the writer.

Noting that the Israelis and the Palestinians had deferred the questions of the refugee, the Jewish settlements and the status of Jerusalem to the final stage of negotiations, the writer said that with Israel's declared plans for a settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim the door has been opened wide for starting the final status negotiations which should start as soon as possible, before Mr. Netanyahu has the chance to make further deceptions.

Saleh Qallab, a writer for Al Dustour, discussed Yasser Arafat's visit to the United States where, he said, he heard nice words from the American president and readiness to help the Palestinians deal with their economic problems.

But Mr. Arafat has also heard from the U.S. president advice to refrain from escalating tension and remain persevering and patient with Mr. Netanyahu's government, said the writer.

The Palestinians could consider Mr. Arafat's visit as useful and fruitful, but they should also remember that Bill Clinton would never ask Mr. Netanyahu to stop his defiance of the Palestinians or halt the seizure of their lands, said the writer.

He said that Mr. Arafat and the Palestinians should realise that Mr. Netanyahu is counting on the U.S. president and the U.S. Congress and the Zionist lobby at the White House and Capitol Hill for more aid, more weapons, more cash and more strength with which he could defy the whole world.

Mohammad Kawash, a writer for Al Dustour, said that the Palestinian leadership has opted for diplomacy through contacts with the U.S. administration in order to gain support for its drive to attain a settlement with the Israelis.

The Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat is counting, as he said, on President Clinton to halt Israel's Jewish settlement programme and prevent the creation of yet another settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim, noted the writer. But, he added, failure on the part of the U.S. administration to act soon and stop the Israeli defiance of the world would open the door for violence because Jerusalem is the red line that should not be crossed and its status should be decided in the final negotiations for a settlement.

The writer said should the U.S. fail to dissuade Israel from building this settlement, the Middle East area will be up in flames once again.

Rashid Hassan, a writer for Al Aswaq, discussed prospects for carrying out public administration reform in light of His Majesty King Hussein's message to the prime minister and said that nobody can deny the fact that the civil service in Jordan is burdened with routine bureaucracy and ineffectiveness and that the successive governments took no serious steps to put matter right.

The writer said all that the previous governments did was to create committees to help carry out reform, but nobody has ever heard anything about the committees' achievements if any.

Stressing that the present situation needs immediate solutions, the writer said that the government will no doubt confront major problems in its drive to introduce reform, predicting that officials unfit for their jobs but who reached senior posts would fight any government's moves towards reform.

He said that the government is facing many ills, like nepotism, favouritism and wasta (connection) as well as many forms of administrative and financial corruption and, above all, a bloated civil service, and it requires a miracle to help it deal with the situation.

Taher Adwan, a writer for Al Dustour, criticised the opposition members of Parliament for withdrawing from Parliament sessions rather than face the government and deal objectively with the questions at hand.

The writer said that the opposition withdrew from the last session in a show of protest against what they called government's failure to declare its position clearly with regard to Israel's illegal moves in Jerusalem. He said that the withdrawal reminds us of the opposition's boycotting a Parliament session addressed by President Clinton and one when the government faced the public fury over the end of subsidies for bread and animal feed. But, said the writer, the absence of parliamentarians gave the government the chance to win the day and failed to achieve anything at all.

The writer said the question related to Israel's practices and Jerusalem requires a united stand on the part of people and government of Jordan, noting that the prime minister's statement on the issue before Parliament has indeed embodied the true feelings of the man in the street.

The writer said that Parliament should remain the main forum for the opposition and other members of Parliament to make their voice heard and where the legislative and executive authorities should show a united stand vis-à-vis the various challenges facing the nation.

Europe provides a guide to shrinking world's rich-poor gap

By James Gustave Speth

NEW YORK — The other day, I opened my newspaper and thought I must be dreaming. A front-page headline read: "Gap closes between rich and poor nations."

On closer examination, I found the article addressed rich and poor nations within the European Union. The worldwide reality is quite different. The income disparity between the richest 20 per cent and the poorest 20 per cent of the world's people has more than doubled in the last 30 years, going from 30 to 1 to 61 to 1. While 15 countries have seen a surge in economic growth over the past three decades, 1.6 billion people live in more than 100 countries that are worse off today than they were 15 years ago. Between 1960 and 1993, the per capita income gap between industrial and developing countries almost tripled, from $5,700 to $15,400.

Perhaps there are lessons to be learned from the convergence process at work in the European Union. The front-page article that struck my imagination was referring to a 10-year assessment of the so-called "Cohesion Fund" programme, the EU's internal aid policy. It found that a convergence process was under way; the "Four Poor" — Greece, Portugal, Spain and Ireland — have raised average per capita income from 66 per cent of the EU average in 1983 to 76 per cent in 1995. The programme, having been so successful, will possibly be scaled down — a great example of "aid to end aid."

What can we, at the U.N. and in the development community, learn from this success story? Can these results help us identify under what conditions aid "works," and how developed nations can most efficiently spend their scarce public monies?

Consider these facts about the EU's regional aid, and how they may be applied to global aid policy:

• EU aid represents a very substantial commitment — almost one-third of the EU budget, comprising programmes such as the community structural funds and the European Regional Development Fund. Intra-European aid targeted at specific regions amounts to a projected budget of 117 billion European currency units for 1994-1999, the equivalent of $182 billion.

As parliaments in rich countries are more and more tempted to cut back on official development assistance, it is worth remembering that the scale of aid funds often conditions the visibility of the results — as was apparent in another aid success story, the Marshall Plan. The Marshall Plan transferred some 3 per cent of U.S. income to Europe between 1948 and 1952. This was enough to complete the task.

Granted, the EU success story has been possible because a majority of "rich" states in the Union are helping a minority of "poor" states. It is more difficult for the world's 30 or so rich countries to draw enough resources to help the world's poor 150 countries on a massive scale. Yet the world's "rich minority" still represents a hefty 78 per cent of global gross domestic product. And currently, the global rich spend only an average of .29 per cent of their national income on official development aid. So a commitment to development must be maintained for progress to be visible. A condition of this continued effort is political support.

• Intra-EU aid is justified by a sense of shared community. This has made it possible for European countries to commit significant resources with support from their electorates. This sense of common destiny is also increasingly present at the global level. American presidents are constantly being asked by the electorate to "do something" about human tragedies all over the world — whether in Bosnia, Haiti or the Middle East. Sixty-five per cent of Americans want the United States to take an active part in world affairs.

International trade grew by 10.2 per cent in 1994, more than four times as much as world growth, and an increasing share of investment is transnational. Multilateral institutions such as the United Nations bring the world's leaders and their aides into daily contact with each other. Non-governmental organisations are increasingly reaching out to partners in other countries. A web of trade, investment, diplomacy, grassroots action and telecommunications is forging a global village, from which our sense of commitment to "the other half" is strengthened.

The need for support and awareness in donor countries is matched by a need to ensure the national implementation of projects in the developing countries themselves. Half the cost of EU projects is provided by the recipient countries. This underscores the importance of accountability and good institutions.

• All the EU recipient countries are stable, open societies where the rule of law prevails. Their built-in public accountability helps sustain donor confidence that they can ensure aid will not be diverted to special interests. Their systems also provide external investors with some guarantee of long-term continuity, and guarantees that the institutions are legitimate and that any future changes will take place in a peaceful manner.

This final point shows that effective aid does not depend solely on its being substantial and supported by an international commitment. Recipient countries also have a role to play in aid's success, by strengthening the legitimacy, transparency and accountability of their institutions.

If we take these lessons to heart, we may read, one day, front-page reports showing that the gap between the rich and poor nations of the world is finally narrowing.

The writer is administrator of the United Nations Development Programme. This article is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

6 Jordanians freed from Kuwait are home

AMMAN (J.T.) — Six Jordanians jailed in Kuwait for "collaborating" with Iraq after its 1990 invasion of the emirate have returned home after they were released under an amnesty, but 24 remain in Kuwaiti jails as efforts continue for their release.

Ten Jordanians were freed under the amnesty announced by the Kuwaiti government on Feb. 25, but four of them remained in the emirate pending payment of penalty for overstaying their residency permit.

An unknown number among the 24 remaining Jordanian prisoners were also believed to have benefited from the amnesty which reduced their terms, but no details were available.

Earlier reports had said that Kuwait held up to 60 Jordanians in its prisons after they were found guilty of "collaborating" with Iraq during its occupation of the emirate.

Independent sources told the Jordan Times some of the 60 could be serving term after being convicted of "offences of criminal nature" that have nothing to do with the charge of "collaborating with the occupier."

Officials said last week that efforts were continuing to convince the Kuwaiti authorities to release all the prisoners, but there was no definite indication whether the efforts would prove fruitful.

The six who returned home on Thursday were greeted by more than 300 family members as well as relatives of those who remained in jail.

"I can't describe my happiness," said Walid Hassan, 33, a former press officer at Kuwait's Information Ministry.

He spoke to the Associated Press as he received first aid treatment after fainting aboard the airplane.

Family members and relatives crowded the arrival gate at Amman airport, dancing and ululating.

Women wept when it was announced that the airplane landed.

Security officials and onlookers clapped when the prisoners walked towards the airport arrival lounge to meet family members.

"It's true we're happy to reunite with our families, but deep down we are sad for the continued detention of other Jordanians in Kuwait," said Ahmad Hanoon.

He served six years of his 10-year sentence for working for a newspaper established by Iraq during its seven-month occupation of Kuwait.

Fatima Salameh, a U.S. citizen born in Jordan, stood in the airport's lounge watching the emotional reunions.

Her two sons — Mohammad, 26, and Basil, 25 — remain in Kuwaiti detention.

"We call on (U.S). President (Bill) Clinton to intervene to help release my sons," she said with tears in her eyes, AP reported.

The Public Freedoms Committee of the Professional Associations Union has formed a group to lobby for the release of all Jordanian prisoners in Kuwait.

The group's strategy, its members say, is to raise the issue at every forum and opportunity available.

"We have to keep the issue alive just as the Kuwaiti government does not waste an opportunity to raise the issue of Kuwaitis it says are held in Iraq after the war," said one member of the group, which included personalities and activists from all walks of life.



Ali Hassan, one of 10 Jordanians freed from a Kuwaiti prison on February 25, is embraced by his grandmother on arrival at Amman airport on Thursday (Reuters photo)

King offers Kabariti new mandate

(Continued from page 1)

of having deputy-ministers is one of the reasons behind the aggravation of the (bureaucratic) problem in terms of the person's keenness to serve people close to him at the expense of public interest."

He also criticised the deputies' boycotting of the Lower House' sessions stating that "it is not what the deputy was elected to do. He was elected to be the voice of integrity regarding every issue, be it major or minor."

The King's message strongly indicated that a new government will be confronted with the difficult challenge of eliminating excess bureaucracy, adopting at times painful decisions to downsize by cutting down staff and to increase efficiency.

"It is better to find a decent way to meet (civil servants') needs, or the needs of most of them if they deserve it, than keeping things as they are having each stumbling over the other without productivity and with no work being done," the King said.

The King was critical of the system that propagates waste and inefficiency and which harms the public interest, hindering the country's development and progress. He referred to one particular incident when he and the prime minister visited a department. "We were left with the impression that this department would be producing more without 70 per cent of its personnel."

The King explained that fighting a stifling bureaucracy was not intended to deprive government employees of their livelihood and there are humanitarian cases that need to be attended to, adding that "there are great responsibilities which we had to face in 1967 and 1990."

The King announced in the interview that there is a leaning towards setting a minimum wage and providing the necessary social welfare for citizens.

"What is happening is that we devise ways to keep people in their place at the expense of the public interest and thus holding back our march forward," he said, explaining that specialised committees will be formed to study ways to increase the productivity and efficiency of the administrative system, and to reduce the number of personnel.

According to official sources, these committees will be entrusted with drawing up early retirement schemes and compensation systems which do not exist under current Jordanian law and regulations.

"The coming stage will be transitional only in terms of holding elections," the King said in emphasising that a reshuffled or new Cabinet will also have to introduce reforms while preparing for the parliamentary polls, which are scheduled to be held before early autumn.

The Cabinet shake-up will most likely take place in early April, after the King's and the prime minister's return from an official visit to the United States, according to the sources.

"We cannot waste a day that we can use to achieve something or to waste an hour or a minute," the King told JTV.

The new government will also need to address the issue of regional representation in the Cabinet in order to appoint qualified and able ministers. "Even the representation of the government for various areas I think is not right," the King said. "They (ministers) should be the best and the most qualified so that they can shoulder their responsibilities and perform their duties." Traditionally Jordanian governments have been formed on a quota system where regions, minorities and ethnic groups are represented according to their numbers and strength.

The King criticised newspaper articles that are not based on studies and which are more concerned with filling column space. "Writers have to write to have their columns appear in their newspapers several times a week or more. This is not the right way," he said, echoing several comments which he had made regarding the performance of the Jordanian media.

The King expressed his impatience with complacency and with those who do not pinpoint existing problems in an attempt to make changes and improvements. "I am patient by nature," he told his interviewer. "However, nothing in the world irritates and pains me more than to have something wrong in front of you and to have someone arguing that it is not the case, saying that things are alright."

The King rebuffed those who have been particularly eager to criticise the performance of Jordan. "Many want this country to stay as it is, even to regress and *many do not have faith in* it...They were always betting that it is the smallest, the weakest and the most vulnerable to collapse." He stressed, however, that "this country is in good shape and it is serving its nation. It must be the example and a model to be followed by others and it will be, God willing."

King phones Netanyahu

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Kabariti told reporters during a news conference with visiting Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Ben Jassem Ben Jaber Al Thani that the talks with Mr. Arafat in Gaza would tackle obstacles facing the peace process.

Jordan's representative to the PNA, Ziyad Majali, said Mr. Kabariti would be accompanied by concerned Jordanian ministers and officials.

Secretary General of the Ministry of Industry and Trade Mohammad Smadi, who headed a committee which prepared for Saturday's meeting, said that the two sides reviewed and prepared an agenda for a range of topics related to Jordanian-Palestinian cooperation in economic, educational, scientific, agricultural and health fields.

Economic cooperation between the two sides acquires priority in the meeting, said Dr. Smadi, adding that the topics aim at enabling Jordan to serve as a window for the Palestinians to the outside world.

Basem Awadallah, economic adviser to Mr. Kabariti, expressed satisfaction with the steps taken so far to implement the agreements signed by Jordan and the PNA in January of 1995.

Those agreements covered cooperation in education, culture, the environment, monetary and banking affairs, communications, transport and trade.

The two sides, said Dr. Awadallah, are pursuing efforts to increase trade, noting that the present level does not meet the minimum targetted by the two sides largely due to the closure of the Palestinian territories and other Israeli restrictions.

He said Jordanian public and private sectors were ready to contribute to the reconstruction of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and to provide expertise in the fields of industry, customs, banking, infrastructure, standards and specifications and the creation of industrial cities.

King to review all orphanages

(Continued from page 1)

old, lacking qualified persons to run it and help the children," said the King in a letter to Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti after the visit.

"I also witnessed the low standard of health care, malnutrition, lack of cleanliness, shortage of clothes and lack of basic requirements that should exist in such foundations," the King said in the letter, which also gave instructions that Al Hashemiyeh Palace be turned into a home for orphans (see page 3).

In yesterday's JTV interview the King said he was infuriated by the state of the orphaned children.

"I am a patient (person) by nature," he said, "but (I) found myself in a position where I almost lost control over myself."

The King said that the problem of orphans does not end with the case of the 186 children of Al Hussein Welfare Institute.

"Statistics show that there are 1,100 (orphaned) children all over the Kingdom," he said.

"I am following up on that and contacts are underway to study the situation as a whole. God willing, the required changes will be taken soon. If needed, I will visit most of the centres to see their needs."

The King paid tribute to the Armed Forces, "which we always resort to when we find need for medical care and to those ladies who participated in changing the situation (at the orphanage)."

The King also said Jordan received responses "from Jordan and elsewhere regarding the case."

The Amman Chamber of Commerce last week donated JD25,000 for the benefit of the children and Qatari Crown Prince Sheikh Jassem Ben Hamad Al Thani, who ended a two-day visit to Jordan on Thursday, also made a financial contribution of undisclosed amount. These donation "are a source of comfort for us and make us grateful to all," the King said.

Israel to hand over 2% of W. Bank land

(Continued from page 1)

ulators from Mr. Netanyahu's ruling coalition threatened to withdraw their support over the issue. But the Palestinians were equally angry.

"They are trying to deceive the world by saying they are withdrawing from nine per cent of the West Bank. Geographically speaking, the actual transfer is only two per cent," said Saeb Erekat, chief Palestinian peace negotiator.

"This is not the peace we agreed upon," he told AFP, adding that the Palestinians had already informed Israeli officials "that we reject this decision."

Meanwhile, some 2,000 Palestinians marched in protest Friday to an East Jerusalem hilltop where Israel plans to build thousands of homes for Jews on Palestinian land.

About 100 Israeli soldiers lined up on a ridge with machineguns and sniper rifles to prevent the protestors from crossing the boundary from the West Bank into Arab East Jerusalem to climb to the building site on Jabal Abu Ghneim.

Instead the marchers, who included several Palestinian dignitarites and PNA ministers,

"This conflict (at Jabal Abu Ghneim) will be the tomb of Oslo," said the Islamic cleric who conducted the prayers, referring to the Oslo peace accords.

"We are sending a message to the whole world so it understands Israel is stealing our land," he said.

"We want to live in freedom." "Netanyahu go away," chanted the protestors as they marched to the Israeli army line.

Mr. Netanyahu gave the green light last week to construction of 2,500 homes for Jews on the Arab East Jerusalem hilltop called as Har Homa by Israelis.

The plan, which ultimately calls for building 6,500 homes for more than 30,000 Jews, has sparked anger among Palestinians and condemnation from world governments.

Palestinian officials have pledged to block construction at Jabal Abu Ghneim and warned the issue would spark widespread violence, but Friday's demonstration turnout was far below the 10,000 marchers organisers said they had hoped for.

Organisers sought to avoid any confrontation with the army, using loudspeakers repeatedly to call for the crowd to keep their distance from the army line. "No one approach the soldiers," they shouted.

"This is a peaceful demonstration and it will remain a peaceful demonstration," said Salah Taamari, a member of the elected Palestinian legislative council and a main organiser of Friday's march. "We want to gather world opinion to put pressure on Israel to stop this," he said.

In the West Bank village of Omar Beit, dozens of Palestinians stoned Israeli soldiers who fired teargas to disperse the crowd.

Beit Omar residents apparently were angry that Israeli soldiers were not withdrawing from the village on Friday, as was expected. The village reportedly is to come under Palestinian control as part of Israel's weekend troop pullback from West Bank rural areas.

The incident began when Palestinian youths from Beit Omar threw stones at cars travelling along the Hebron-Jeruslem road that runs near the village.

Israeli troops in riot gear chased the stone throwers into the village and took up positions on rooftops. In response, dozens more Palestinians threw stones and bottles at the soldiers.

There were no reports of injuries. Five people were arrested.

"We want to show the Israelis that if they don't want to make peace, they can have this...We are a strong nation and our struggle will not be complete until we have Jerusalem," said one 19-year-old stone thrower, who would give only his first name, Ali.

The withdrawal, which Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said would take at least 48 hours to implement. Under the Hebron accord, Israel must complete the third phase of redeployment by mid-1998.

At the U.N. the United States moved swiftly on Friday against a proposed Security Council resolution criticising Israel's housing project in Arab East Jerusalem, hinting it might use its veto.

The U.S. delegation "has made a good faith effort to reach a consensus on this issue" by advocating the softer approach of a presidential statement, U.S. Ambassador Bill Richardson said as he left the council chamber.

"Regrettably, one member of the council (Egypt) did not even permit a discussion of that alternative option," said Mr. Richardson.

He said the U.S. delegation "will most likely be casting ... a vote on this issue" at a council meeting scheduled for 6 p.m. (2300 GMT).

On Thursday, U.S. diplomats privately threatened to use their country's power of veto on the council to turn down any draft resolution on the issue. Resolutions are considered stronger than statements.

Mr. Richardson refused on Friday to state whether the United States would veto the resolution, saying only that "I am going to be talking to my government."

"But you all know the American point of view," he added, "that the parties themselves should resolve the Middle East issues, not the council.

One Western diplomat said Mr. Richardson's response could mean a U.S. abstention in the vote on the resolution sponsored by the four current European members of the 15-member council — France, Portugal, Sweden and Britain.

The resolution, formally introduced on Friday by Sweden, calls the proposed settlement "illegal" and "a major obstacle" to peace.

Crown Prince: Misconceptions should be addressed

(Continued from page 1)

benefits of the association agreement that will soon be concluded between Jordan and the European Union (EU), Prince Hassan said, Jordan is working to develop a Jordanian industrial policy (JIP) geared towards addressing "built-in rigidities to allow the freer interplay of market forces."

He added "intellectual property rights (IPR) will be approached positively through the restructuring and development of industries."

Under the Euro-Jordan association agreement, the Kingdom will be granted a five-year grace period to review, rewrite and enforce internationally acceptable IPR laws.

As for the pharmaceutical and chemical industries, the country would be granted only five years — two years before the partnership agreement and three after it comes into effect.

Noting that the restructuring efforts require regional funds, the Prince said, the November 1995 Barcelona process has recognised the need for such funds and allocated, through the MEDA programme, $6 billion in the form of grants to the south Mediterranean countries during the period 1995-1999.

He added that the European Investment Bank (EIB) will also provide loans of about $6 billion during the same period.

Stressing the need for "official development assistance," the Prince said this kind of assistance should be geared towards promoting "soft security, that is to say, the social and economic components of security rather than its hard or military aspect."

The London conference, which brought together the 12 Mediterranean and the 15 European countries, is geared towards promoting investment opportunities in the Mediterranean region, EU officials in Amman said.

It was also part of the EU's efforts to implement the declarations of the Barcelona conference which aims at economic interaction, security and political cooperation as well as cooperation in social, cultural and human affairs, they said.

The Crown Prince told participants at the conference in London that countries of the Mediterranean region and the EU should "work together to realise the huge potential for private investment in the Mediterranean region and build a zone of shared security, peace and prosperity for the 600 million people represented (at the conference.)"

He said the Euro-Mediterranean partnership launched in Barcelona, "provides a comprehensive framework for such a joint endeavour."

He added that the partnership "can create one of the largest free trade areas in the world with a population of more than 600 million people with a combined GNP of approximately $7 trillion."

"For the gains of the partnership to materialise," the Prince said, the 12 Mediterranean and the 15 European nations should "evolve and implement a complex agenda that will take us to the 21st century with a sense of shared prosperity rather than destructive clash and confrontation."

He said that it was not enough to promote cooperation among Jordan, Israel, Egypt and Palestine as well as their partners in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, without taking into consideration the disparity in income among these countries, and not only the movement of goods and services but labour as well.

Comparison of per capita income solely can be misleading, he continued.

"In normal terms, GDP per capita in some EU countries is 20 times higher than its level in certain Mediterranean states. However, if income is measured on the basis of PPP (purchasing power parity i.e. adjusting the level of income on the basis of comparative prices in different countries), then its level in Mediterranean countries reaches about a quarter of that in the EU."

On another front the Crown Prince said that discussion of regional security should take into consideration the proximity of the Gulf to the Middle East and Mediterranean regions.

"The facts of geography show that the Mediterranean is closely interconnected with the Middle East including the Gulf."

The Gulf, he added, "is endowed with the world's largest oil reserves. Its geography connects the Middle East-Mediterranean regions with South Asia and beyond. Its people and culture provide a bridge between two ancient civilisations. Its security is closely connected with and dependent upon the state of its relations with its neighbours to the east and west as well as to the north."

The Crown Prince called for the inclusion of Iran and Turkey in any future security arrangements. He said Turkey "is already a well established member of the Western security system, but it is also a recognised bridge between the Gulf and the Middle East," while Iran "represents a vital link between the Gulf area and the great continent of Asia."

The security and stability of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership should not be seen as a separate arrangement from the security and stability of the Gulf area including Iran and Turkey, he stressed.

The Prince said that conclusion leads us to consider an Organisation of Cooperation in the Middle East (OCME) which "I myself have advocated this approach for many years now."

"As a small, moderate country in the heart of a volatile region, Jordan has always been at the forefront of progressive thinking on these issues, and stands ready to play a constructive role in turning theory into practice, principles into instruments," the Crown Prince said.

Earlier Thursday, Prince Hassan held talks with British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind on the Middle East peace process and issues of mutual concern.

The Crown Prince reiterated Jordan's opposition to Israeli plans to build Jewish settlements on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem.

The Prince and Mr. Rifkind stressed that Israel's decision to build these settlements constitutes a violation of the Oslo agreement, adding that it also poses a real threat to the Middle East peace process.

Prince Hassan called for fighting "Islamophobia," describing Islam as a religion of peace unaffiliated with either violence or terrorism.

They also discussed the Palestinian refugee issue and emphasised their right to repatriation and/or compensation.

The issue was also brought up at a meeting Prince Hassan had with International Monetary Fund (IMF) Deputy Director Stanley Fisher who was also invited by the Prince to Jordan to acquire first-hand information on the conditions of refugees.

Israeli debt rises to $97.4b

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli government debt rose 3.5 per cent after inflation to 327.3 billion shekels ($97.4 billion) at the end of 1996, the Bank of Israel has said.

The central bank said the government's average internal and external debt over the year was equal to 101 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), down from 103 per cent in 1995 and 109 per cent in 1994. But the central bank said the 1996 decline was at a slower pace than in the previous eight years.

"The decline in the ratio of debt to GDP was due in 1996 like in past years to the higher rate of growth for GDP than for debt," the Bank of Israel said. "Because the 1996 growth rate was relatively low, the decline in the ratio of debt to GDP was less."

Israel's domestic debt grew approximately four per cent after inflation to 245.5 billion shekels, while foreign debt increased about one per cent to 81.8 billion shekels. Overall debt grew 2.0 in 1995 and 0.6 per cent in 1994.

The central bank noted that Israel's debt to GDP was far higher than the Maastricht treaty standard set by the European Union, which calls for a top ratio of 60 per cent.

"At the rate of decline in recent years, not a few years of fiscal discipline will have to pass before the Israeli economy meet international criteria," the Bank of Israel said.

The bank said the percentage of debt not linked to inflation continued to grow last year to seven per cent of the total from three per cent in 1995 and one per cent in 1994.

The bank said the percentage of GDP going towards paying interest on government debt also fell last year to 5.3 per cent from 5.9 per cent in 1995 and 6.0 per cent in 1994.

It said Israel's dollar cost of foreign debt also declined to 6.8 per cent in 1996 from 7.1 per cent in 1995 and 7.6 per cent in 1994. The bank said one of the reasons for the decline was Israel's improved standing in international financial markets.

Rubin says U.S. carefully studying cost of World Bank shakeup

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin has described the cost of a proposed World Bank shakeup as "significant" and said it was being closely reviewed by the Clinton administration.

Mr. Rubin also urged increased U.S. support for international financial institutions, to which the United States now owes $1.5 billion.

The administration is asking Congress for $1.6 billion this year to begin paying off its outstanding debts to such institutions, which include the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and regional development bodies, and to meet annual commitments.

Mr. Rubin hailed a restructuring plan drafted by World Bank President Robert Wolfensohn that could cost as much as $400 million over two years.

Bank officials insist the proposal, to be discussed by the bank board on March 13, will pare down non-essential office staff, make the institution a more effective provider of development aid and ultimately save money.

Mr. Rubin acknowledged that the bank's management has long been a target of congressional criticism.

But he said that in the past two years the bank had cut its administrative budget by 10 per cent and was now weighing an even more drastic reform measure.

Nevertheless, according to the secretary, the restructuring "also has a significant pricetag and we are carefully reviewing its details."

He said the administration had reached no conclusions on the plan.

Mr. Rubin decried declining congressional backing for multilateral financial bodies, warning that "if we do not meet our commitments, we will jeopardise our leadership in these institutions ... and undercut our ability to direct ongoing reforms."

"We cannot lead with other people's money," he said.

Mr. Rubin noted that developing countries now account for 42 per cent of U.S. exports — which are increasing at twice the rate of exports to developed countries.

But the United States is heavily in arrears to the International Development Association (IDA), a World Bank unit making interest-free loans to some of the world's poorest nations.

As a result, other IDA donor countries had imposed curbs on contracts available to U.S companies in IDA-sponsored projects, a move that irked many in the U.S. Congress.

But Mr. Rubin disclosed that other donors had recently agreed to recommend that $1 billion be set aside for U.S. firms in IDA projects.

"While this result is not everything we wanted," he said, "I believe (it) is the best we could achieve."

Middle East peace partners plan trade fair

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel, Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians will hold a regional food exhibition under the auspices of the United States in Tel Aviv in February 1998, Israel's trade and industry ministry said Thursday.

It said the decision was taken by the "Taba Forum", a body formed after Israel's peace deals with Jordan and the Palestinians in the last several years. The group met this week in Amman, the ministry said.

The ministry said a textiles fair to be held in Cairo in September of this year was under consideration but that it might be delayed because of time pressures.

At this week's meeting, the sides also agreed their standards institutes would continue work to "harmonise" standards in the region.

A working group comprised of customs authorities directors-general was established "in order to discuss and find ways of regional cooperation regarding various customs aspects."

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates — Prices as at 7/03/97 19:50

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7172	0.6242	1.4828	121.83	1.3677	1701.90	1.9348	5.7895
DE Mark	0.5823	-	0.3634	0.8635	70.94	0.7963	990.83	1.1264	3.3712
GB Sterling	1.6020	2.7530	-	2.3757	195.23	2.1911	2727.12	3.0997	9.2771
CH Franc	0.6744	1.1587	0.4209	-	82.12	0.9219	1147.39	130.43	3.9044
JP Yen	0.0082	1.4086	0.5118	1.2165	-	1.1221	13.95	158.65	4.7471
CA Dollar	0.7312	1.2559	0.4564	1.0844	1.12	-	1243.88	1.4144	4.2316
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0080	0.3681	0.0871	1398.01	0.8029	-	11.35	3.3988
NL Guilder	0.5166	88.74	0.3224	76.57	12.27	0.7070	988.72	-	2.9926
FR Franc	0.1727	0.2967	0.1078	25.6255	21.03	0.2363	33.42	33.4200	-

Energy

Oils	Last	Previous
Brent	19.80	19.85
W. Texas	20.90	20.95
Bony	19.60	19.85
Dubai	17.94	17.33
UL Gas	197.00	195.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4580	0.16644	0.39569	32.5013
JD Dinars	0.2708	0.4651	0.17000	0.4019	33.2127
KW Dinar	3.2938	5.65611	2.05592	4.88759	401.445
BH Dinar	0.7370	1.26591	0.4600	1.09348	89.8511
CY Pound	1.946	3.3433	1.2147	2.8877	237.15

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	348.8	349.3
Silver (oz's)	5.15	5.20
Platinum (oz's)	379	380
AL (3 Months)	1672	1673
CU (3 Months)	0	2400
Zinc (3 Months)	1256	1257
Lead (3 Months)	683	684
NI (3 Months)	0	8150

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Period C'ncy	- 1 - Month	- 3 - Months	- 6 - Months	- 9 - Months	- 1 - Year
USD	5.31	5.43	5.46	5.74	5.88
GBP	6.62	6.56	6.29	6.39	6.46
JPY	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.37	0.56
DEM	3.06	3.09	3.06	3.06	3.12
FRF	3.21	3.26	3.28	3.32	3.37
CHF	1.93	1.78	1.78	1.62	1.77
ITL	7.29	7.21	7.01	6.85	6.83

Main Equity Indicies

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
NewYork	DOW JONES	7002.04	57.34	0.83	7004.73	6944.7	6944.7
Newyork	S&P 500	809.83	6.12	1.02	809.89	798.56	798.56
London	FT-SE 100	4420.3	21	0.48	4420.7	4391.4	4399.3
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	16128.76	107.43	0.67	16286.7	16132	16061.3
Paris	CAC 40	2708.28	9.36	0.35	2718.95	2670.35	2698.92
Frankfurt	DAX	3782	42.6	1.14	3784.69	3771.77	3817.8

Energy

Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	203.92	Spot
Cocoa (S/ton)	1347	Spot
Sugar (S/ton)	310.5	Spot
Wheat (S/ton)	196	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	23.62	Spot
Tea (usc/kg)	125	Spot
Barley (S/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice (S/ton)	310	Spot

*** JOD Cross Rates**

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1471	1.1496
DE Mark	0.4127	0.4148
CH Franc	0.4715	0.4736
FR Franc	0.1223	0.1229
JP Yen	0.5915	0.5944
NL Guilder	0.3868	0.3888
IT Lira	0.4165	0.4185

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

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Bahrain's non-oil trade deficit widens

MANAMA (R) — Bahrain's non-oil foreign trade deficit widened to 414.6 million dinars ($1.1 billion) in 1996 from a 314.6 million dinar deficit reported in 1995, official figures published showed.

The Central Statistics Organisation said Bahrain exported goods worth 453.3 million dinars in 1996 and imported goods worth 867.9 million dinars.

In 1995, the Arab Gulf state exported goods worth 582.4 million dinars and its imports were worth 897 million.

The statistics, published by Al Ayam newspaper, said aluminium exports dropped to 273 million dinars in 1996 from 331 million dinars in 1995.

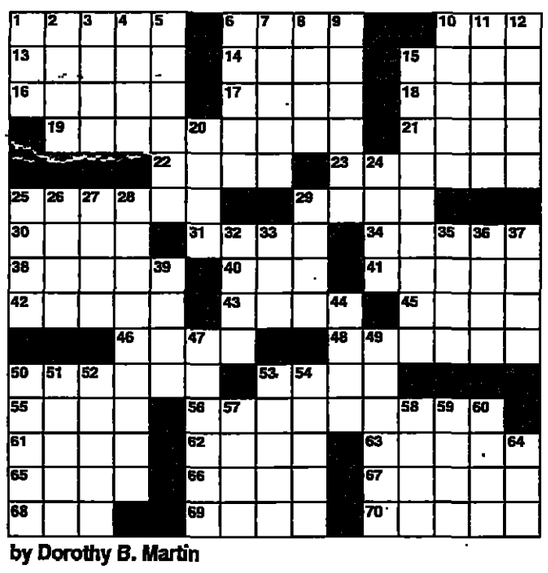
Aluminium Bahrain, the Middle East's biggest aluminium plant, has a production capacity of more than 460,000 tonnes a year that is due to rise to around half a million tonnes by the middle of 1997 after a $130 million expansion.

Iron and steel exports fell to 57.6 million dinars in 1996 from 58.6 million a year earlier.

Bahrain, least wealthy Arab Gulf state, is a small independent oil producer. It produces around 40,000 barrels per day (bpd) from its own fields and receives the entire 140,000 bpd from an offshore field shared with Saudi Arabia.

JORDAN TIMES
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684311-699634

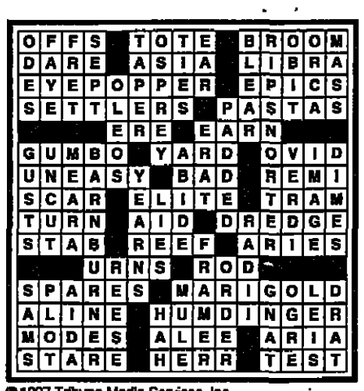
THE Daily Crossword



by Dorothy B. Martin

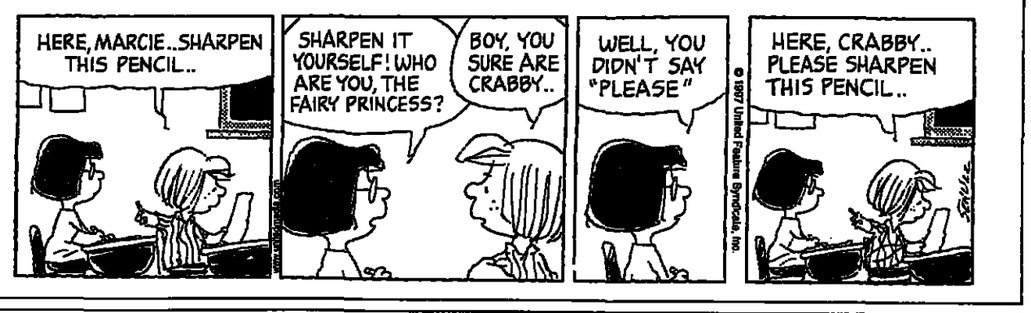
ACROSS
1 Use a loom
6 Alan or Cheryl
10 Cereal grain
13 Outlander
14 Rose's sweetheart
15 Church section
16 Challenged
17 Lichen
18 Reedy
19 Love song of old
21 Assistant
22 Prudent
23 Rue
25 Join the army, e.g.
29 And others: Lat.
30 Actor Connery
31 Royalist
34 Semiarid region of Africa
38 Caesar or Waldorf
40 Born
41 WWII plane, — Gay
42 Wear away
43 Buried treasure?
45 Mollusk
46 Differ
48 — and thread
50 Spirit
53 "It's — to tell a lie"
55 So be it
56 "I —" (Astaire-Rogers film)
61 Powder
62 Healing plant
63 Back tooth
65 "My country, tis of —..."
66 Go by car
67 Martini item
68 Corrode
69 Active person
70 Lassoed

DOWN
1 Bankroll
2 Biblical kingdom
3 Breezy
4 Swerve
5 Provides with income
6 Fernando or Lorenzo
7 "To a rag, and —..."
8 Medallion
9 Leave in the lurch
10 Biblical land
11 Actor's line
12 Doctrine
15 Immediately
20 Catcher's glove
24 Relax
25 Abstract being
26 Approach
27 French composer
28 Beforehand
29 Looked at
32 Sole
33 Antique car
35 Retain
36 Israeli airline
37 Metallic cloth
39 Transaction
44 Arthurian lady
47 Bonus
49 Captivate
50 Dull finish
51 City on the Missouri
52 Sublease
53 Battery terminal
54 Guide
57 Hodgepodge
58 — contendere
59 Cut short
60 Roof feature
64 Blushing



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Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You may get a message from afar today which could confuse you, however, study it well and it might just be an opportunity to advance in your career activities. Later this evening will be good to relax with your loved ones.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) This is not a good day today to radical changes in business or your routines, especially in the morning. You should not trust your usual advisers, since you have discovered that they have wrong on other occasions.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) A fellow associate could be annoying today, however, allow this to keep you from getting your career activities completed. This evening is a good time for new contacts, so send out the word immediately.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Stay calm at career activities today, and you'll find a way to advance your ambitions. This evening should be spend with your mate in some secluded, romantic location which is special only to you both.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Don't be extravagant where pleasure is concerned today, safeguard your assets for a rainy time. Any marketing should be completed on the afternoon or late this evening when there won't be such a crowd.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Try not to disagree at home this morning, or you'll ruin that harmonious atmosphere. Get out with your mate and paint the town red tonight, however, be sure you are not out too later or you could be later to career activities.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Contact those individuals who can be of great assistance to you today, however, make sure any conversations are short and to the point. Later this evening will be good to seek out the advice of knowledgeable people.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Show that you value your relationship with your mate today, and don't do anything which could cause strife. It is not a good idea to disagree over any bill, so keep quite otherwise there could be heated words exchanged.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) A fellow associate may be a bit flightly today, however, be sure you keep feet planted firmly on the ground. Handle community affairs wisely later this evening so that you can be successful in your endeavours.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You can easily turn unfavourable conditions into constructive ones at this time. Be sure you are extremely careful while driving on the highway tonight, so that you don't get into any difficult situations.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Don't allow a nervous fellow associate to prevent you today from enjoying a recreation you had planned. Try to spend more time with your mate and plan a special romantic evening which he or she will appreciate.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Find out what your loved ones desire today, and try to fit it into your busy schedule. This is not a good time later this evening to invite guests in, however, use tact if you do, so that you don't offend anyone.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper.

Investors seem to adopt positions at AFM

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The stock market was largely lethargic last week, although turnover rose and prices slipped marginally as investors continued to maintain positions in leading companies expected to announce bonus shares, brokers said.

Investors were also keeping a close eye on approvals for Jordanian export orders to Iraq by the U.N. Sanctions Committee under Baghdad's oil-for-food agreement with the world body, brokers said.

The Amman Financial Market (AFM) said in its weekly summary that volume during the week ending Thursday was JD 3.7 million, with 2.2 million stocks changing hands.

"Although the turnover represents an increase of one million dinars over the previous week, the market was largely lacklustre this week because key players stayed put," said an AFM dealer.

The AFM weekly report said the share price index, calculated on the basis of 60 leading firms listed in the market, closed at 156.08 points, down 0.74 points or 0.47 percentage points from the week's opening of 157.82 points.

Commercial banks and investment houses led the week's trading with a volume of 2.22 million dinars, followed by industrial companies with 1.17 million dinars, services sector operators with 290,000 dinars and insurance firms with 17,000 dinars.

On a sectoral level, commercial banks and investment houses shed 0.17 percentage points, insurance companies 0.58 percentage points, industrial companies 0.62 percentage points and service sector operators 2.26 per cent.

This week's business involved stocks of 78 companies, said the AFM report. As business closed for the week, nine of them had gained, 56 slipped and 17 remained stable.

According to AFM dealers, speculators are sitting on most shares of companies which are expected soon to announce bonus shares to shareholders after they convert voluntary reserves into capital.

The expected conversions come after Parliament last month adopted a government recommendation to abolish a 15 per cent tax on voluntary reserves and profits turned into equity.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179
ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (01/03/1997 - 05/03/1997)
WEEKLY REPORT

DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACT	NO. OF SHARES EXECUTED	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE MARKET PRICE	TURNOVER SHARES	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
266.000	260.000	ARAB BANK	14.6	1.31	51	3620	909625	265.00	269.00	265.00	266.50	+ 1.50	265.972	.078	5
2.100	1.900	JOR.NATIONAL BK.	-	0.00	137	314392	626137	2.00	2.01	1.92	1.94	- .06	1.992	.749	5
5.100	4.900	CAIRO AMMAN BANK	10.3	3.00	3	30000	150000	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	-	5.000	.300	1
3.440	3.200	BANK O. JORDAN	10.8	0.00	12	4900	15516	3.21	3.30	3.00	3.00	- .21	3.167	.047	5
1.150	1.040	MID.EAST INV.BK.	70.9	0.00	19	56250	59788	1.05	1.08	1.05	1.08	+ .03	1.063	.563	2
2.480	2.330	INDUSTRIAL DEV.BK.	5.2	6.05	8	4623	10940	2.37	2.38	2.30	2.30	- .07	2.366	.042	3
4.920	4.700	THE HOUSING BK.	12.4	2.97	29	11450	53454	4.70	4.70	4.63	4.65	- .05	4.668	.046	4
2.830	2.730	JOR.KUWAIT BANK	19.8	0.00	18	2783	7637	2.77	2.77	2.73	2.73	- .04	2.744	.028	5
.970	.840	JOR.GULF BANK	5.1	8.24	84	290050	248546	.86	.88	.84	.85	- .01	.857	1.450	5
4.050	3.840	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	18.4	0.00	60	16064	62270	3.93	3.95	3.81	3.84	- .09	3.876	.110	5
3.380	3.250	JOR.INT FIN.BANK	17.3	0.00	10	23813	76240	3.28	3.25	3.20	3.20	- .08	3.202	.238	4
1.620	1.600	REIT.AL-MAL (REITRA)	1.0	9.68	2	250	388	1.60	1.55	1.55	1.55	- .05	1.552	.013	2
1.210	1.170	PHILADEL.INV.BK.	-	0.00	1	300	363	1.21	1.21	1.21	1.21	-	1.210	.003	1
BANKS SECTOR					434	758295	2220902	INDEX NUMBER : 200.51				CHANGE :- 0.17%			
1.600	1.600	ARABIAN SEAS INSUR.	11.0	5.00	2	2500	3755	1.60	1.52	1.50	1.50	- .10	1.502	.156	2
2.000	1.930	JOR FRENCH INSUR.	5.4	10.47	17	6752	12906	1.95	1.93	1.88	1.91	- .04	1.911	.307	4
INSURANCE SECTOR					19	9252	16661	INDEX NUMBER : 119.52				CHANGE :- 0.58%			
1.680	1.640	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	11.4	7.27	24	5458	9010	1.66	1.66	1.64	1.65	- .01	1.651	.036	5
2.630	2.630	HIMEH MINERALS	13.0	5.28	1	300	795	2.63	2.65	2.65	2.65	+ .02	2.650	.258	1
4.420	4.350	ARAB INT HOTELS	16.5	3.08	1	100	417	4.35	4.17	4.17	4.17	- .18	4.170	.001	1
2.460	2.450	SHIPPING LINES	10.2	8.23	1	500	1215	2.46	2.43	2.43	2.43	- .03	2.430	.007	1
1.330	1.210	NATL. PORTFOLIO	-	0.00	120	63795	75349	1.24	1.24	1.14	1.15	- .09	1.181	1.276	5
.980	.940	REAL ESTATE INV.	21.3	3.88	10	3875	3744	.97	.99	.96	.96	- .01	.966	.082	4
.640	.600	JORDAN DEVEL.TRAD.	30.8	0.00	71	50	30	.60	.60	.60	.60	-	.600	.001	1
.460	.450	MACH.EQ. RENT.MAIN.	-	0.00	4	3000	1380	.46	.46	.46	.46	-	.460	.250	2
1.590	1.440	MID. EAST HOTELS	60.3	0.00	7	3400	4760	1.44	1.40	1.40	1.40	- .04	1.400	.067	2
3.500	3.400	ARAB INTL.INV.EDUC.	13.3	5.93	14	9700	32887	3.42	3.42	3.37	3.37	- .05	3.390	.096	4
1.080	1.040	SARKA EDUCATION	-	0.00	10	3890	3959	1.05	1.04	1.00	1.00	- .05	1.018	.086	4
2.160	1.890	UNIPHO CO.	8.6	6.11	80	41550	75148	1.89	1.88	1.76	1.80	- .09	1.809	.831	4
.840	.780	UNION LAND DEV.	-	0.00	6	2100	1618	.79	.79	.76	.76	- .02	.770	.042	4
SERVICES SECTOR					279	137718	210311	INDEX NUMBER : 106.72				CHANGE :- 2.36%			
3.500	3.440	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	19.8	2.89	101	63154	216654	3.47	3.46	3.40	3.46	- .01	3.431	.104	
3.400	3.350	JOR.PHOSPHATE MINES	35.5	0.00	11	4120	13604	3.35	3.31	3.30	3.30	- .05	3.302	.009	3
6.100	6.000	ARAB POTASH CO.	18.2	3.33	8	1100	6575	6.00	6.00	5.95	6.00	-	5.977	.001	3
10.150	10.000	JOR. PETROL.REFINARY	10.3	7.88	43	6739	68399	10.15	10.16	10.12	10.15	-	10.150	.105	5
1.380	1.280	WOOLEN INDUSTRIES	61.3	0.00	31	25800	35495	1.37	1.40	1.35	1.38	+ .01	1.376	2.580	4
2.890	2.660	INDUSTRIAL COMM.AGR.	35.0	0.00	40	6588	17147	2.67	2.65	2.57	2.60	- .07	2.603	.132	5
7.000	6.950	JOR.WORSTED MILLS	8.9	3.60	4	1300	9035	7.00	6.95	6.95	6.95	- .05	6.950	.033	4
3.950	3.720	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	20.7	5.31	61	19733	74415	3.83	3.81	3.74	3.77	- .06	3.771	.219	5
7.250	6.600	JOR.CER.MFG IND.	8.5	3.64	11	4700	32564	6.95	7.00	6.87	6.87	- .08	6.929	.188	3
2.250	2.200	JORDAN DAIRY	13.5	6.82	2	150	330	2.20	2.20	2.20	2.20	-	2.200	.009	2
1.630	1.600	JOR.PIPES MANFCT.	8.9	7.45	5	1120	1802	1.60	1.61	1.61	1.61	+ .01	1.609	.034	2
1.340	1.270	RAFIA INDUSTRIES	160.7	0.00	3	500	635	1.30	1.27	1.27	1.27	- .03	1.270	.050	1
5.100	4.800	DAR ALDAWA DV.INV.	12.9	4.26	1	100	470	4.90	4.70	4.70	4.70	- .20	4.700	.002	1
3.600	3.450	ARAB ALUM.IND.	8.6	8.70	4	1300	4485	3.48	3.45	3.45	3.45	- .03	3.450	.022	1
.620	.590	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	-	0.00	86	98800	56040	.59	.59	.56	.56	- .03	.567	2.994	5
1.200	1.170	ARAB PAPER CONV.IND.	7.8	9.01	7	11800	13603	1.19	1.18	1.15	1.15	- .04	1.153	.506	3
1.230	1.130	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	-	0.00	3	1000	1130	1.13	1.13	1.13	1.13	-	1.130	.025	1
.680	.650	NATIONAL INDS.	9.5	9.38	20	7792	5037	.65	.65	.64	.64	- .01	.646	.130	5
1.120	1.030	INTERMED.PETRO.CHEM.	-	0.00	14	3250	3360	1.03	1.05	1.01	1.03	-	1.034	.081	5
.820	.800	JOR. ROCKWOOL INDS.	135.1	0.00	1	100	77	.81	.77	.77	.77	- .04	.770	.003	1
2.300	2.300	NATL.CABLE WIRE.MFAC	14.3	0.00	1	250	588	2.30	2.35	2.35	2.35	+ .05	2.352	.005	1
.790	.730	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	-	0.00	2	1400	977	.73	.70	.68	.68	- .05	.698	.035	2
1.610	1.490	ARAB PHARM.CHEM.	28.1	0.00	45	31050	47160	1.55	1.54	1.49	1.50	- .05	1.519	.621	5
1.100	1.080	KAWTHER INVEST.	40.3	5.36	1	50	56	1.10	1.12	1.12	1.12	+ .02	1.120	.003	1
1.800	1.690	UNIV. BOOK.INDS.	5.1	11.83	66	31400	52771	1.73	1.72	1.64	1.69	- .04	1.681	.628	5
1.410	1.340	JOR.INDS.RESOURCES	17.0	0.00	124	72414	96899	1.37	1.36	1.32	1.35	- .02	1.338	.905	5
.960	.910	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	24.2	0.00	58	26525	23938	.92	.92	.89	.89	- .03	.902	.332	5
1.900	1.860	EL -BAY READY WEAR	118.9	0.00	1	150	278	1.86	1.85	1.85	1.85	- .01	1.853	.003	1
1.260	1.200	INTL. TOBACCO	27.5	0.00	36	21950	26137	1.20	1.22	1.17	1.17	- .03	1.191	.220	4
1.050	.990	UNION CH. & VEG.	24.4	0.00	23	21700	21557	1.01	1.01	.99	.99	- .02	.993	.620	5
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR					813	466035	831215	INDEX NUMBER : 117.61				CHANGE :- 0.62%			
GRAND TOTAL					1545	1371300	3279088	INDEX NUMBER : 156.08				CHANGE :- 0.47%			

NO. OF DAYS TRADED : 5
DAILY AVERAGE OF TRADING VOLUME : JD 655,818
DAILY AVERAGE OF TRADED SHARES : 274,260
DAILY AVERAGE OF CONTRACTS : 309

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PARALLEL MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (01/03/1997 - 05/03/1997)
WEEKLY REPORT

DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACT	NO. OF SHARES EXECUTED	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE MARKET PRICE	TURNOVER SHARES	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
.530	.460	CENTRAL GEN.STORAGE	19.3	0.00	4	1100	508	.47	.48	.46	.48	+ .01	.462	.033	2
.610	.520	JOR.TRADE FAC.	13.6	0.00	49	40250	20515	.52	.52	.50	.51	- .01	.510	.958	4
.480	.450	ARAB FIN.INVEST.	-	0.00	55	99075	43681	.46	.46	.42	.42	- .04	.441	.991	5
.720	.700	UNION INV. 50%	66.0	0.00	32	32333	6248	.71	.71	.69	.69	- .02	.193	.147	3
.700	.650	AL-DAWLIYAH 75%	14.7	0.00	9	30168	12183	.65	.68	.64	.65	-	.404	.215	4
.640	.610	ARAB FOOD & MED.	-	0.00	14	3317	1986	.61	.61	.59	.59	- .02	.598	.095	4
.500	.470	ARAB INTL.INV.TRD.	-	0.00	29	84600	39643	.47	.48	.46	.46	- .01	.469	.692	5
.280	.210	JOR.INDS.MATCH-JEMCO	-	0.00	16	16950	4016	.21	.24	.22	.22	+ .01	.237	.997	5
1.430	1.390	NATL. CHLORINE	-	0.00	12	13992	19547	1.40	1.40	1.38	1.40	-	1.397	.194	2
.570	.530	NATL. TEXTILE	-	0.00	13	4300	2264	.53	.54	.52	.52	- .01	.527	.172	4
.640	.580	HAYZAK DIES & MOULDS	-	0.00	30	47450	29372	.62	.63	.60	.61	- .01	.619	3.163	4
.650	.620	MIDEAST PHARM. 75%	-	0.00	13	10400	3843	.62	.62	.61	.61	- .01	.370	.109	4
.780	.740	JORDAN STEEL	-	0.00	74	123418	92391	.74	.76	.73	.74	-	.749	.823	5
.510	.500	ARAB ELECT.INDS.	148.4	0.00	10	12808	6530	.51	.51	.51	.51	-	.510	.213	3
.620	.600	RAZI PHARM. 65%	-	0.00	49	47605	11276	.60	.59	.58	.58	- .02	.237	.476	5
.470	.440	INDS. ENG.	25.9	0.00	29	20800	9014	.44	.45	.42	.42	- .02	.433	.297	5
.820	.740	NATL. POULTRY	-	0.00	15	11350	7911	.74	.72	.69	.71	- .03	.697	.114	4
.680	.660	MID.EAST COMPLEX	7.7	0.00	55	88050	59059	.67	.70	.65	.66	- .01	.671	.400	5
.990	.940	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	63.2	0.00	1	100	90	.94	.90	.90	.90	- .04	.900	.002	1
.510	.470	NATL.MULT.ENG.MANICO	-	0.00	115	116001	51835	.47	.49	.43	.44	- .03	.447	.387	5
GRAND TOTAL					626	804125	421953								

NO. OF DAYS TRADED : 5
DAILY AVERAGE OF TRADING VOLUME : JD 84,391
DAILY AVERAGE OF TRADED SHARES : 160,825

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Real estate prices, rent in Amman decline

** RENT RATES have noticeably declined recently with a 300-square-metre apartment being rented between JD200 to JD250 a month compared to JD300-JD350 a month during the peak summer season.

Meanwhile, sale prices of land and commercial shops, either in eastern or western Amman, have stabilised. Even the cost of a square metre of a housing unit with a deluxe finishing has stabilised at about JD200. A square metre of a commercial building costs around JD300 whereas the cost of a square metre of a housing unit near the American embassy in the Abdoun area rises to JD350.

According to real estate brokers, the prices vary according to supply and demand but, in general, an apartment in eastern Amman is likely to cost JD15,000 while the cost of an apartment in western Amman can be as high as JD150,000.

In some detail, a 200-square-metre deluxe apartment in the Gardens area (Wasfi Al Tell street) costs about JD75,000 whereas a super deluxe 375-square-metre apartment in the same area costs between JD120,000 and JD150,000. In the Shmeisani area, a deluxe 230-square-metre apartment costs about JD65,000.

The cost of an apartment in the Sports City area is no less than JD40,000 for a 160-square-metre apartment. However, the price is around JD35,000 to JD40,000 for apartments of the same size in some side streets of the area.

In the Abdoun area, a 250-square-metre apartment costs no less than JD90,000 compared to JD60,000 for a 150-square-metre deluxe apartment in the Um Al Summaq area. An ordinary apartment of the same size and in the same area cannot be much cheaper as the price would be between JD50,000 to JD55,000.

In the eastern areas of Quweismeh, Abu Alanda, Jabal Al Zahoor, Jabal Al Natheef and Al Marrikh, the cost of an apartment comes to about JD15,000. Brokers note that the highest price of JD25,000 was recorded as the cost of a 125-square-metre apartment in the Shieliyeh neighbourhood in eastern Amman.

The brokers expect apartment prices to rise in some parts in eastern Amman as some real estate companies intend to set up commercial compounds in those areas.

Most brokers agree that the noticeable decline or stabilisation in real estate prices or rents is due mainly to a retreat in "foreign tourism" to Jordan during the winter months. They note that tourists prefer to visit Jordan during the summer months.

Apartments are now occupied by Arab and foreign students and diplomats, the brokers indicate noting that many Arab students prefer to live in western Amman and in buildings that are located on the University Road or near the universities (Al Aswaq).

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Hill beset by problems in Australian GP practice

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Defending champion Damon Hill was beset by problems Friday as he struggled with the 13th fastest time in his new Arrows car in practice for Sunday's season-opening Australian Grand Prix here.

Hill, who was sensationally dumped by Williams Renault team owner Frank Williams after winning last year's World Drivers' Championship, was more than two and a half seconds slower than the fastest driver, Ferrari's Michael Schumacher, in his first run at the Albert Park circuit this week.

The Englishman clocked one minute 35.073 seconds to Schumacher's 1:32.896, after a series of problems with the Arrows car, signalling a competitive season ahead for the champion after last year's title euphoria.

Hill had gear box trouble, with a damaged dog ring forcing him to stop in the opening morning session and his mechanics had to work fast to get him on the track for the afternoon hit-out.

"Because of the problem this morning we were flat out in the afternoon session to try and do all the work we needed to do, so I am very pleased to be only two and a half seconds away from the front," said 36-year-old Hill.

"In all honesty, I think that if we can qualify two and a half seconds away from the front of the grid (for Sunday's race) that would be a good result for us right now.

"I had to resort to spinning at the end of the session as I was having a long brake pedal, but no harm done — it is all part of the excitement."

Arrows chief executive Tom Walkinshaw was delighted with Hill's input in the set-up of the car.

"We are reasonably satisfied with our first day of practice," he said.

"It would have been nice to have no problems, but we have to be realistic.

"Damon was able to improve the set-up of the car during each run."



Williams Renault driver Canada's Jacques Villeneuve watches the timings monitor during a practice session for the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne January 7. Villeneuve recorded the fourth fastest time after the day's two practice sessions for the season's first Formula One race at the Albert Park street circuit (Reuters photo)

1997 Formula One calendar

LONDON (R) — Calendar for the 1997 Formula One championship:

March 9	Australia (Melbourne)
March 30	Brazil (Interlagos)
April 13	Argentina (Buenos Aires)
April 27	San Marino (Imola)
May 11	Monaco (Monte Carlo)
May 25	Spain (Barcelona)
June 15	Canada (Montreal)
June 29	France (Magny Cours)
July 13	Britain (Silverstone)
July 27	Germany (Hockenheim)
August 10	Hungary (Hungaroring)
August 24	Belgium (Spa-Francorchamps)
September 7	Italy (Monza)
September 21	Austria (A-1 Ring)
September 28	Luxembourg (Nurburgring)
October 12	Japan (Suzuka)
October 26	Portugal (Estoril)

Profiles of 1997 Formula 1 teams and drivers

LONDON (R) — Profiles of teams and drivers in this year's Formula One championship:

TWR Arrows Yamaha (chassis — Arrows A18, engine — Yamaha OX11A, tyres — Bridgestone) 1. Damon Hill (Britain, 36). Career record: races 67, wins 21, pole positions 20, fastest laps 19, points 326. Defending world champion. Championships - 1 (1996). 2. Pedro Diniz (Brazil, 26). 33, 0, 0, 0, 2.

Defending world champion Hill, having lost his seat at Williams, faces a tough challenge with the Tom Walkinshaw-owned Arrows team which has never won a Grand Prix. Diniz, a rich Brazilian, offers potential support for what looks like a season of consolidation.

Williams Renault (chassis — Williams FW19, engine — Renault RS9 V10, tyres — Goodyear) 3. Jacques Villeneuve (Canada, 25). 16, 4, 3, 6, 78. 4. Heinz-Harald Frentzen (Germany, 29). 48, 0, 0, 0, 29.

Defending Constructors' Champions Williams start favourites again, with Villeneuve likely to land the drivers' title. Frentzen looks certain to land his first win and offer the Canadian a tough challenge.

Ferrari (chassis — F310B, engine — Ferrari 046/2, tyres — Goodyear) 5. Michael Schumacher (Germany, 28). 85, 22, 14, 25, 362. Championships — 2 (1994, 1995) 6. Eddie Irvine (Britain, 31). 48, 0, 0, 0, 28.

Twice champion Schumacher has talked down his expectations in pre-season testing, but could be a dark horse for the title, particularly if his car is more reliable than last year. A Schumacher attack on the crown is likely.

Benetton Renault (chassis — B197, engine — Renault RS9, tyres — Goodyear) 7. Jean Alesi (France, 32). 118, 1, 1, 4, 189. 8. Gerhard Berger (Austria, 37) 196, 9, 11, 19, 359.

Having lost top technical men Ross Brawn and Rory Byrne to Ferrari, Benetton have had to regroup this winter. But they have done in style with the veteran pairing of Alesi and Berger putting in solid testing performances that augur well for the season ahead.

McLaren Mercedes (chassis — mp4/12, engine — Mercedes-Benz, tyres — Goodyear) 9. Mika Hakkinen (Finland, 28). 79, 0, 0, 0, 91. 10. David Coulthard (Scotland, 25). 41, 1, 5, 4, 81.

After two disappointing years, this team are in need of an upturn in fortunes to justify the Mercedes' involvement. Hakkinen is fast and tipped to win races, while Coulthard has already proved he can. Occasional wins, but no title challenge is the likely scenario.

Jordan Peugeot (chassis — Jordan 197, engine - Peugeot A14EV4, tyres - Goodyear) 11. Ralf Schumacher (Germany, 21). 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 12. Giancarlo Fisichella (Italy, 24). 8, 0, 0, 0, 0.

Two newcomers with very little experience offer an untried pairing for the desperate Jordan team as they seek their first win. Peugeot will be ending their exclusive supply of engines after this season — they will power Prost in 1998 — but want to go out with a win.

Prost Grand Prix (chassis — JS45, engine — Mugen-Honda MF301HB, tyres — Bridgestone) 14. Olivier Panis (France, 30). 49, 1, 0, 0, 38. 15. Shinji Nakano (Japan, 25). 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 10.

Lack of funds could undermine the Tyrrell challenge again as they try to balance technical achievement with the challenge of finding the sponsors. Both drivers are fast, well-respected and experienced enough to deliver good performances if the cars are developed to match their ambitions.

Minardi Hart (chassis — Minardi M197, engine — Hart 830 AV7, tyres — Bridgestone) 20. Ukyo Katayama (Japan, 33). 78, 0, 0, 0, 5, 21. Jarno Trulli (Italy, 22). 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0.

Now supported by the investment of Benetton chief Flavio Briatore, this little Italian team could prove one of the surprises.

Stewart Ford (chassis — Stewart SF1, engine — Ford Zetec-R V10, tyres — Bridgestone) 22. Rubens Barrichello (Brazil, 24). 64, 0, 1, 0, 46, 23. Jan Magnussen (Denmark, 23). 1, 0, 0, 0, 0.

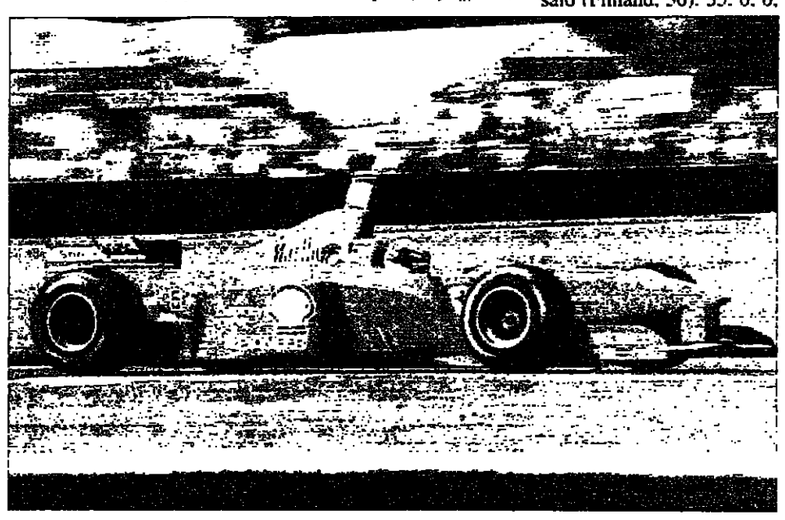
The team launched in a blaze of publicity by three times champion Jackie Stewart, backed by Ford and led by Barrichello could emulate the achievements of Jordan and score points in its first season.

Lola Ford (chassis — Lola T97/30, engine Ford Cosworth Zetec V8, tyres — Bridgestone) 24. Ricardo Rosset (Brazil, 28). 16, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 25. Vincenzo Sospiri (Italy, 30). 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0.

Lola, a chassis manufacturer, has entered the title race in its own right for the first time and will use its own engine from mid-season. It seems a big risk, but the technical excellence of the company suggests they will soon find the pace to challenge the mid-fielders if their old Ford engines do not let them down.



Germany's Michael Schumacher (R) and his Ferrari teammates check the timings of fellow drivers during the first practice session at Melbourne's Albert Park (Reuters photo)



Germany's Michael Schumacher drives his Ferrari during the second practice session in preparation for the season's first Formula One race on March 9 (Reuters photo)

Raiders sign Super Bowl MVP Desmond Howard

OAKLAND (R) — For the second year in a row, the Oakland Raiders have signed the previous season's Super Bowl most valuable player, this time the Green Bay Packers' kick returner Desmond Howard.

Howard, whose electrifying returns helped the Packers to a 35-21 victory over the New England Patriots in Super Bowl 31, was given a four-year, $6 million contract to play for the Raiders.

"I think it's an emotional rollercoaster in some instances because I'm leaving a team that I helped to win a world championship," Howard said.

After comeback Larry Brown claimed the award for the Dallas Cowboys in Super Bowl 30, the raiders rewarded him with a four-year, $12 million free agent contract.

The Raiders said they plan to use Howard as a wide receiver. Nearly out of football less than a year ago, Howard will be catching passes from Jeff George, another of Oakland's big off-season signings.

"Watching Jeff George, I've been a fan of his since college," Howard said. "I played against him in the big ten, Jeff George has the ability to take us to the Super Bowl."

"Now we're putting people in place that are going to help us win," Raiders coach Joe Bugel said. "We're not ashamed to say that we want to win Super Bowls here. You win with people, and we're bringing in people that are impact, explosive players."

The Raiders used all-pro receiver Tim brown for some of their return duties last season and Bugel said the team is going to deploy some multiple-receiver offensive sets in 1997.

"We're going to be in some four-wide receiver packages this year so add another guy capable of getting down the field," Bugel said.

"I talked to Tim Brown last night and told him that we had a chance to add Desmond and he was very elated about this. Timmy now feels that he can solely concentrate on the receiver position."

Two factors appeared to contribute to Howard's abandoning the packers — his higher price tag following his Super Bowl success and a strong pitch from Raiders owner Al Davis.

Packers general manager Ron Wolf told the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel: "We know there's certain players we're going to lose because they're going to be paid more money than we can afford to pay. That's obviously what happened here."

The Washington Redskins made Howard the fourth overall pick in the 1992 draft, but he was claimed in the 1995 expansion draft by the Jacksonville Jaguars and later was released before signing with the Packers as an unrestricted free agent.

Robson still sure he can bring Middlesbrough glory

LONDON (R) — As a player Bryan Robson was one of the most straightforward people you could meet. On the field for England and Manchester United, his passion for the fight, his drive and his ambition earned him the lovable nickname Captain Marvel.

How ironic therefore that the team he manages has turned into one of the most characterless sides in many years — outstanding in Cup matches, woeful in the league.

Until Wednesday night when their league form finally matched their Cup form and they crushed Derby 6-1, Middlesbrough were nosediving out of the Premier League, while rocketing towards Wembley in both the League and F.A. Cups.

As fate would have it, Middlesbrough and Derby clash again in the quarterfinals of the F.A. Cup at Derby on Saturday. It's a match that on current form Middlesbrough should win. So therefore they could well lose it. Their crazy season has left Robson facing the twin stresses of chasing success — and avoiding failure — both at the same time.

At one time, nothing seemed to be able to get in Robson's way. In 1995, the 40-year-old steered Middlesbrough, one of the boom clubs in the north-east of England, to promotion from the first division after a highly-successful first season in charge.

Last year they finished a creditable 12th in the Premier League, but this season, after spending a great deal of money in the "foreign" transfer market, he has seen 'Boro languish at the foot of the table, but reach the final stages of the two cup competitions.

"The club is more than 100 years old and it's never won a major trophy, so that's something to look forward to," explained Robson, who has established his reputation as a coach since leaving Manchester United to join Middlesbrough in May 1994.

There is no doubt that Robson has the class to fulfill his ambition. In addition to the 4.75 million pounds ($7.7 million) purchase last season of Brazilian Juninho, Robson has since recruited Italian international Fabrizio Ravanelli from Champions' League holders Juventus for 7 million pounds ($11.3 million). Brazilian international Emerson from Portuguese champions FC Porto for 4 million pounds ($6.5 million) and, recently, Gianluca Festa from Inter Milan for 2.7 million pounds ($4.4 million).

This influx of European talent may have set a trend for other Premier League clubs to follow, but at the same time cultural problems — such as Emerson's three trips back to Brazil before Robson persuaded him to stay — have been an unsettling factor.

"There's no reason why we shouldn't bring the world's biggest names to this club. You've got to think big to be big," Robson told the British football magazine, goal.

"I know we've had the Arnold Muhrens and Frans Thijssens from Ipswich a couple of decades ago, and they were the first foreigners to really achieve anything in this country.

"Then we had Ossie Ardiles and Ricky Villa and they were years ago as well. After that we were signing foreigners, but we've never really signed the top foreigners, the real, real class stars because Italy and Spain always got those types of players and before that Germany did.

Robson's addiction to quality football was demonstrated in his own career. With experience in three World Cups, 90 international caps and a lengthy spell as national skipper, the 40-year-old is a born winner.

He made his first appearance for England in a 1-1 draw against Ireland in 1980 at Wembley, and collected his last cap at the same venue in a 4-0 world cup qualifying victory over Turkey in 1992.

Robson began his career with West Bromwich as a 17-year-old in 1974 and he went on to make more than 200 appearances during his seven-year stay.

After making a name for himself as a natural ball-winner and exceptional passer, a record 1.5 million pounds ($2.4 million) transfer to Manchester United followed in 1981.

He played for England in the 1982, 1986 and 1990 World Cups and his attitude and commitment to the game have been carried into management.

Robson has never experienced relegation before and neither will he want to.

Even if Middlesbrough would appear to be in dire straits, you cannot imagine his name being connected with failure, and a cup triumph and Premier League survival would be the right formula to end the season on a high.

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Bakhit Wa Adilah (2)
Al Jardal Walkankah
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World Indoor Athletics Championships start as Boldon chases gold in Paris

PARIS (AFP) — Ato Boldon's quest for gold got off to a lacklustre start on the opening day of the World Indoor Athletic Championships here on Friday.

The 23-year-old from Port of Spain won his heat but his time of 20.99secs was well outside his 20.35, run in Birmingham earlier this year.

Chile's Sebastian Keitel, in the same heat as Boldon, clocked the same time but was placed second.

Boldon, who had earlier planned to try for the sprint double until he saw the packed schedule, blamed the track for his slow start.

But the Trinidadian, who is still smarting over the fact he could only come third in the Atlanta Olympic 100m last year, stressed that only victory here would satisfy him.

"If I don't get the gold it will be a big disappointment," said Boldon.

Threatening Boldon's run for gold are American Rohsaan Griffin, defending champion Geir Moen of Norway and Francis Obikwelu of Nigeria.

In the men's 60m defending double title holder Bruny Surin remained firmly on track to make it three in a row. The Canadian won his heat in 6.56secs.

Defending women's 200m champion Melinda Gainsford-Taylor got a wake up call in the first of the heats. Although the 25-year-old from New South Wales easily won her heat in 23.14secs Jamaica's Jullet Cuthbert clocked a blistering 22.76secs - the second fastest time this year.

Britain's Donna Fraser, who only a week ago set a new British record, had to suffer a nail biting ten minutes after a farcical start threatened to wreck her medal hopes.

Although the starter signalled what appeared to be a false start the runners kept on going.

As they came down the home straight frantic officials were desperately trying to clear the track after leaving the starting blocks in place for what they thought would be a re-run.

An upset Fraser could only manage third but her 23.78 was enough to put her in the semi-finals.

American Olympic 100m champion Gail Devers cruised through her opening qualifying heat with a 7.21secs — the second fastest time in the morning heats.

But she had an appalling start and afterwards blamed the starters gun which had been causing problems all day.

Chandra Sturrup of the Bahamas was fastest, winning her heat in 7.18, a personal best.

Reigning 400m indoor champion Irina Privalova, one of Devers' main threat following the last minute withdrawal of defending champion Merlene Ottey because of a back injury, won her opening heat in 7.27.

Haile Gebrselassie comfortably won his 3,000 metre heat. The 23-year-old crossed the line with a huge grin, underlining how easy it was for him.

His performance was bad news for Italian Gennaro di Napoli who won the first qualifying heat.

Di Napoli is looking for his third successive indoor title but Gebrselassie is looking set to spoil that dream.



Haile Gebreselassie of Ethiopia sprints to the finish line to qualify for the men's 3,000 metres second round on the first day of the three-day World Indoor Athletics Championships at Bercy stadium in Paris March 7 (Reuters photo)

IOC names final five candidates for 2004 Games

LAUSANNE (R) — The International Olympic Committee (IOC) selected Athens, Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Rome and Stockholm as the five final candidates to host the 2004 Summer Games on Friday.

The cities, chosen from the 11 candidates bidding for the Games, will now go forward to a vote of the full IOC session on September 5, also in Lausanne, when the venue will be decided.

The unlucky candidates were Istanbul, Lille, Rio De Janeiro, San Juan, Seville and St. Petersburg.

An IOC selection college made the decision after studying a detailed technical report of each bid and hearing presentations from all 11 candidates on Thursday.

There were no real surprises in the five chosen cities with Athens, Buenos Aires, Rome and Stockholm coming out best from the IOC's evaluation report on the technical merits of their bids.

Cape Town was expected to be added to the list for geographical and political reasons. The continent of Africa has never staged an Olympic Games and many sporting leaders have said in the past that South Africa deserves international recognition for its transition from the apartheid era.

The selection of Buenos Aires also offers South America the chance to stage the Olympics for the first time.

Rome and Athens are expected to be the front-runners even though both have staged the Games before.

Rome last held the summer Olympics in 1960 but have facilities which are the envy of many other candidates. Athens are pushing strongly as the city where the modern Games began in 1896.

Rice scores 48 as Hornets beat Celtics

CHARLOTTE (AP) — Glen Rice scored a franchise-record 48 points and Anthony Mason had his second straight triple-double as the Charlotte Hornets beat the Boston Celtics 122-121 in overtime Thursday night. Tony Smith's layup off an assist from Mason with 39.5 seconds left provided the winning points after Boston had taken a 121-120 on Marty Conlon's drive with 51 seconds left in overtime. Eric Williams scored 25 points to lead six Celtics in double figures, but he lost the ball in the lane with three seconds left on Boston's last possession. Dell Curry then dribbled out the clock. Mason had 19 points, 14 rebounds and 12 assists. Vlade Divac, who knocked the ball away from Williams on the final play, had 23 points and 18 rebounds and fell one assist short of a triple-double.

In Miami, Tracy Murray scored a season-high 22 points and Washington overcame a 15-point fourth-quarter deficit to beat Miami and knock the Heat out of first place in the Atlantic division.

The Heat, division leaders since Jan. 15, fell one-half game behind the New York Knicks.

Murray scored 16 points in the fourth quarter, including four 3-pointers, as Washington won its third in a row and beat a first- or second-place team for the first time this season in 19 tries. Isaac Austin and Jamal Mashburn led Miami with 19 points. The Heat, who shot 7-for-25 (28 per cent) in the fourth quarter, fell to 3-3 since Alonzo Mourning tore a tendon in his foot.

In Philadelphia, Christian Laettner, Steve smith and Dikembe Mutombo all had double digits in points and rebounds and all five Atlanta starters scored in double figures as the Hawks beat Philadelphia.

Laettner had 23 points and 12 rebounds, Smith had 25 points and 10 assists and Mutombo added 12 points and 12 rebounds. Tyrone Corbin and Mookie Blaylock chipped in 15 points apiece.

The win, Atlanta's 40th of the season, was the Hawks' fourth in their last five games.

Derrick Coleman led Philadelphia with 23 points and nine rebounds. Allen Iverson added 20 points.

In Vancouver, British Columbia, Sam Cassell had 26 points and 10 assists to lead New Jersey to over Vancouver as the Nets sent the Grizzlies to their eighth straight loss.

After squandering a nine-point lead, the Nets held the Grizzlies to 11 points over the final seven minutes to snap a three-game losing streak.

Kendall Gill scored 22 for the Nets, rookie Kerry Kittles chipped in 21 and Xavier McDaniel, coming off the bench, had 12 points and 11 rebounds.

The Nets, who pulled down 61 rebounds in beating Vancouver 111-105 last month, outboarded the Grizzlies 56-31.

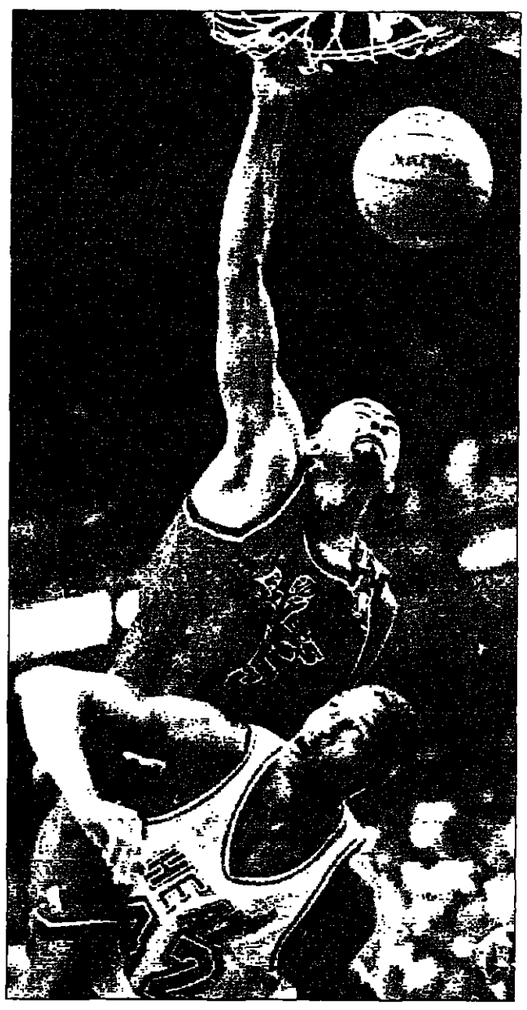
Magic 94, Clippers 93

In Los Angeles, Penny Hardaway's bank shot with 2:11 left put Orlando up by three points, and the Magic held on to beat Los Angeles.

After the Clippers' Rodney Rodgers hit a baseline jumper with 1:46 remaining, neither team scored again.

Hardaway had 21 points for the Magic, Dennis Scott added 19 and Brian Shaw 13. Loy Vaught led the Clippers, who made just one basket in the final 5:16, with 28 points and 12 rebounds.

The Clippers missed three shots in the final five seconds of the game.



Washington Bullets' forward Juwan Howard (5) lands on Miami Heat forward P.J. Brown (42) as he dunks the ball during the first quarter of NBA play at Miami Arena (Reuter photo)

NBA RESULTS

Charlotte	122	Boston	121 (OT)
Washington	99	Miami	95
Atlanta	117	Philadelphia	104
New Jersey	102	Vancouver	96
Orlando	94	LA Clippers	93

Inter, Bayern have tough tasks ahead

PARIS (AFP) — Inter Milan have the unenviable task of preventing Juventus from disappearing over the horizon in the Serie A on Sunday with the European champions looking to go ten points clear of the field.

Juve coach Marcello Lippi believes that "if we win, and we end up with a 10-point lead, the championship will be virtually over. If we draw or lose, then everything is open."

Inter's French midfielder Youri Djorkaeff believes Juventus have more to lose and could therefore be vulnerable at the San Siro Stadium.

Juventus will be without injured playmaker Alessandro Del Piero, but Croatian striker Alen Boksic is likely to return after two months on the sidelines.

Third-placed Parma travel to Perugia, who are struggling and look destined for relegation.

Sampdoria, whose title challenge has faltered after earning just one point in their last three games, are meanwhile away to Atalanta.

In Germany, Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich have a difficult trip to negotiate at third-placed Leverkusen, while closest rivals Borussia Dortmund, fresh from their Champions Cup exploits in midweek, take on tailenders Freiburg.

Bayern, who have a three-point lead are set to be without injured playmaker Mehmet Scholl while international goalkeeper Oliver Kahn is still not fully fit following a bout of chicken pox.

Dortmund also have their casualties, with sweeper Matthias Sammer still out with a calf strain and his deputy Wolfgang Feiersinger suffering a groin strain after Wednesday's encounter with Auxerre. Brazilian defender Julio Cesar is also out after knee surgery.

In France, champions Auxerre have to pick themselves up from their 3-1 defeat in the Champions Cup at Dortmund and travel to a face a Monaco side already looking like champions elect.

Monaco, six points clear in the table and headed for the UEFA Cup semi-finals after their 1-0 win in Newcastle, expect to be at full strength although keeper Fabien Barthez is doubtful with a bruised cheekbone.

Second-placed Paris Saint Germain, who surrendered an eight-point lead they held barely two months ago, also have to wait until Sunday for their match at home to Lyon.

Third-placed Bastia, who could leapfrog PSG this weekend, travel to much-improved Nantes, who have forced their way into the top six after a disastrous start to the season.

Former European champions Marseille, rumoured earlier in the week to be after former Newcastle boss Kevin Keegan, will look to cement their position in the top half of the table when they travel to Guingamp, who are just three points below them.

Marseille coach Gerard Gili will have to make do without striker Xavier Gravelaine, suspended for three matches after his red card for punching Bordeaux's Jean-Pierre Papin last month.

In Spain, Real Madrid will look to go 12 points clear of Barcelona when they host racing Santander, lying in midtable, in the Monday match.

Barcelona, who slid to their sixth defeat of the season when they were thrashed 4-0 in Tenerife on Saturday, are at home to Compostela on Saturday night in a game which they cannot afford even to draw.

Brazilian goal machine Ronaldo has not scored in six of Barca's last seven games and, although he hit a hat-trick in the other one against Zaragoza, he has been distracted in recent days by talk of his contract being bought up by a multinational company.

Third place Betis meanwhile take on reigning champions Atletico Madrid, with both hoping to leapfrog Barcelona should Bobby Robson's side slip up.

Elsewhere, Deportivo la Coruna, host Oviedo.

BRITISH EXPAT OFFERS FOR SALE

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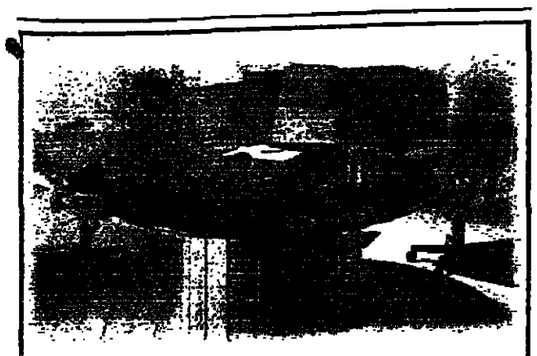
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Kinkel calls for trust as key to peace process

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — In a rare critical note, the visiting German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel asked Israel on Friday to rescind a decision to build a large Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu turned down the request, saying he was committed to building in the eastern sector claimed by Palestinians as a future capital.

However, Mr. Netanyahu singled out the German government as being one of only a few within the European Union (EU) to give his administration a chance.

"When this government came into being, it was said throughout the European Union, with the exception of Germany and one or two other countries, that...we're not serious" about peace, he said.

Mr. Kinkel urged Israel and the Palestinians to stick with the peace process despite the many difficulties.

"The peace process must continue, there is no absolutely no alternative to it," Mr. Kinkel told a joint news conference with Mr. Netanyahu before his return to Germany.

"What seems to be especially important to me is that trust is created between all parties...as a basis for the continuation of the peace process," Mr. Kinkel said.

Earlier friday, Mr. Kinkel met with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and discussed recent Israeli government decisions, including last month's approval of a project to build 6,500 homes for Jews in Arab East Jerusalem.

"We know that the Palestinians are not happy about the Israeli government's decision," Mr. Kinkel said Friday, adding that despite Palestinian anger, Mr. Arafat remained committed to peace.

Mr. Kinkel announced that the Goethe Institute, a centre for German culture and language, would soon open a Gaza branch. Earlier this week, he opened a produce market in the West Bank city of Jericho, paid for by the German government.

On Friday, Mr. Kinkel also toured the Shati refugee camp near Gaza city. During the 1987-1993 uprising, the camp was one of the hot spots of resistance to Israeli military rule. Open sewage runs through the shanty town, and piles of garbage dot the unpaved alleys.

In a basketball court of a Shati school, Mr. Kinkel picked up a ball and aimed at the basket, but missed several times. After a tour of the school, during which he watched a girls' class in self-defence, he returned to the basketball court and scored.

The foreign minister said the visit to Shati had "saddened" him, adding that: "I will try to help these people further."

He inspected a $270,000 project to improve some shacks in the camp, and a programme for vocational training.



HIJACKERS SENTENCED: Two Chechen gunmen raising their hands in the air chant slogans furiously as an ethnic Abkhaz from Georgia (left) looks upset with other pro-Chechen Turks on Friday moments after a Turkish security court in Istanbul sentenced them for hijacking a Russian ferry last year. In the foreground is a Turkish gendarme trying to stop media members taking pictures. Turkish security court jailed nine pro-Chechens — six Turks, two Chechens and an ethnic Abkhaz from Georgia — for more than eight years each for hijacking a Russian ferry with its 200 passengers last year in protest at Moscow's military crackdown in Chechenya (Reuters photo)

Lawyers rush to defend Red Army members after Beirut indictment

BEIRUT (Agencies) — About 50 lawyers on Friday answered an appeal to defend five Japanese Red Army members indicted in Lebanon, in a gesture designed to honour anti-Israeli attacks by the group, a lawyer said.

Lawyer Hani Suleiman, whose Lebanese client was charged with the Red Army members, had called on colleagues to act for the five Japanese, including Kozo Okamoto who was involved in a bloody 1972 attack on Tel Aviv airport.

"With our respect to the Japanese people and government, our defence for Kozo Okamoto and his comrades in Lebanon is a stand of loyalty with them because they stood with our just causes in the previous phases of our national struggle," Mr. Suleiman said at a press conference.

Okamoto and four other Japanese arrested on Feb. 15 in Beirut and the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley were charged Thursday with forging documents and illegal residence in Lebanon, offences that can carry prison terms of between three and seven years.

Mr. Suleiman's appeal was made in the name of the pro-Syrian Arab Nationalist Club whose membership includes Administrative Reform Minister Beshara Merhej and the Independent Committee for the Defence of Freedom and Human Rights.

Examining Magistrate Saeed Mirza told the volunteering defence lawyers that they should first obtain the consent of the Japanese defendants.

In Tokyo, Lebanon's ambassador to Japan, Samir Shamma, said it could take up to six months to complete legal proceedings against the five Japanese.

"It is my personal estimate, but I think it would take five to six months," the ambassador was quoted as telling Former Trade Minister Yoshiro Mori, adding that they would probably then be deported.

Mr. Shamma said Lebanon does not have extradition arrangements with Japan, but Mr. Mori replied that the Japanese government wants to see the five repatriated.

Mr. Suleiman is defending Lebanese nurse Oumaya Abboud, who was charged with "participation" in falsifying documents and illegally practicing medicine.

Mr. Abboud, a nurse who studied acupuncture in Japan, was interrogated Friday by Mr. Mirza, who will question the five Japanese on Saturday.

Lebanese Attorney General Adnan Addoum identified five as Okamoto, Haruo Wako, 48, Mariko Yamamoto, 56, Kazuo Hikodashi, 44, and Masao Adachi, 57, all of whom have been accused by Tokyo of membership in the Red Army.

Mr. Addoum said three other Japanese nationals — Shamoto Yushiyoki, Sei Harada and Moroshima Takayari — were to be released on bail and were free to go home.

Beirut newspapers reported that the three were Japanese security agents sent to Lebanon last year to infiltrate Red Army ranks. They said a top Lebanese security official, identified as Colonel Ali Makki, had worked with Japan to mastermind the arrests and has since resigned.

The Lebanese authorities have said that if convicted of crimes in Lebanon the Japanese would have to complete their sentences here before they could be deported.

"Lebanon is going to try them for violations of Lebanese law," Mr. Addoum said.

The Al Diyar newspaper noted the "failure" of the Japanese special envoy, Hiroshi Hirabayashi, who was reportedly told by Syrian President Hafez Al Assad that any "interference" by a third party was not a good idea.

Yemen hostage site under blockade

SANAA (Agencies) — Dozens of policemen were sent to a region in southern Yemen where seven Germans were kidnapped while riding across the country on motorcycles, officials said Friday.

The captors have reportedly demanded $12 million from the Yemeni government for the tourists' release.

The negotiations are being led by Yemen's interior minister, said the officials, who spoke on customary condition of anonymity. They said policemen had surrounded the area Friday.

The Germans were abducted Monday on a mountain pass, said Ulrich Boettcher, the group's tour guide. He spoke from captivity by satellite telephone Thursday to a German radio station.

He said that the group was being held in the region of Mukalla, 1,000 kilometres southeast of the capital Sanaa. The hostages were being treated "relatively well," he said.

Large parts of Yemen remain lawless, and tribesmen have used kidnappings to pressure the government for money or projects.

An American engineer was kidnapped by a Yemeni tribe last month and was released unharmed after two weeks of negotiations.

Yemen, on the southwest corner of the Arabian peninsula, is rich with archaeological sites. It has drawn an increasing number of tourists, particularly Europeans, seeking remote destinations.

The German foreign ministry said on Thursday it had appealed to Yemen's security services to do all they can to free the seven Germans.

The ministry said Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh had met German Ambassador Helga Graefin Strachwitz and said he had personally taken on the case, setting up three emergency committees.

COLUMN ONE

Hindus urged not to give alms to snake charmers

NEW DELHI (AFP) — An animal rights activist urged people not to pay snake charmers during a Hindu festival Friday, saying the tradition was cruel. The United News of India quoted Satnam Ahuja of the Ahimsa (non-violence) group as saying nearly 100,000 snake charmers visited Bombay every year during "Mahashivratri" festival. Ahuja said the snakes were trapped and then their fangs were pulled out. "Often the venom glands are tied up with a wire. The snakes die a slow death as they are not able to swallow anything." She said giving money to snake charmers encouraged "them to catch more reptiles and perpetrate more cruelty."

Brunei royal family buys Plaza Athenee

PARIS (AFP) — The royal family of Brunei said on Thursday that it had bought the Plaza Athenee luxury hotel in Paris. The family said in a statement issued by the hotel that "this acquisition represents a new stage of economic relations between Brunei and France." The British Granada group had announced the sale on Monday, putting the sale price at 45 million pounds ($72 million). The group intends to sell 15 luxury so-called "Palace" hotels which it acquired when it took over the Forte Group in 1996. A source close to the sale said that the hotel had been bought by Prince Jefri, brother of the Sultan of Brunei. The sultan, Hassanal Bolkiah, is often described as the richest individual in the world.

Cyclist makes it from Alaska to S. America

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) — A 32-year-old U.S. cyclist has broken the world record for a bicycle trip from Alaska to the southernmost tip of South America. Christopher Ramsden completed the 25,000-kilometre journey through 15 countries in eight months and 19 days, less than the nine months he had calculated. "People were very kind to me all through the trip, especially when they learned that my goal was to raise awareness of multiple sclerosis, the leading cause of illness among young people in the United States," Ramsden said.

Germany honours Menuhin

BONN (AFP) — British violinist Sir Yehudi Menuhin received Germany's highest award from Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel at a ceremony in Bonn. According to a communique from the British embassy here, Menuhin, 81, was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the federal republic for his major contribution to music.

Supertramp comes back

PARIS (AFP) — The 1970s megagroup Supertramp unveiled their first album of new songs in 10 years launching a comeback world tour — but denied they were climbing on the bandwagon of a 1970s revival. The group, famous for hits including "The Logical Song" and "Dreamer," said they made the new record, "Some Things Never Change," simply because they felt like getting on the road again. "We're not trying to get on any bandwagon. We're just doing what we feel is good," said veteran band member John Helliwell, part of the band's new eight-member line-up.

Indyk threatened to punch Israeli deputy in 'kike' row

TEL AVIV (AFP) — U.S. Ambassador Martin Indyk threatened to punch a right-wing member of Israel's parliament who called him a "kike" because of his support for peace agreements with the Palestinians, U.S. officials said Friday.

The undiplomatic exchange occured Thursday during a ceremony in memory of slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Mr. Indyk took legislator Rehavam Zeevi aside to complain over remarks last month in which the Israeli called the American envoy a "kike," a pejorative term for Jew.

The Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot reported the following exchange between the two men which was confirmed by a spokesman for the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv:

Mr. Indyk: "The last time sombebody called me a kike was when I was

15 years old and I punched him in the face."

Mr. Zeevi: "Well, try it, you kike."

Mr. Indyk: "You're a disgrace to your people."

Mr. Zeevi: "You're a son of a bitch."

The Yediot Aharonot reported that Mr. Indyk froze under the insult and that other members of parliament intervened to end the standoff.

Mr. Indyk later said that Mr. Zeevi apologised and that he considered the incident closed, embassy spokesman Richard Scorza said.

The outspoken Israeli right-winger already drew a sharp rebuke from the Israeli government last month for referring to Mr. Indyk as a "yid," an anti-Semitic Hebrew word equivalent to "kike."

He made the remark during a parliamentary discussion in mid-February shortly after the U.S. ambassador had voiced opposition to Israeli plans to build Jewish homes in Arab East Jerusalem.

Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu's cabinet sent a protest letter to Mr. Zeevi over the affair.

Mr. Indyk played a central role in U.S. mediation efforts which led to January's Israeli-Palestinian agreement on handing most of the West Bank city of Hebron over to Palestinian rule, an agreement fiercely opposed by Molodet and other far-right movements in Israel.

B'tselem calls for soldiers' trial for Hizmeh killing

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — An Israeli human rights watchdog said on Thursday a Palestinian killed by Israeli soldiers last month in a West Bank village was "very likely" beaten to death.

The Israeli information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories called on the army to put on trial undercover soldiers involved in the killing of Mohammad Abu Hilu in Hizmeh village north of Jerusalem. The army said the matter was still under investigation. An army statement issued after last month's incident said Abu Hilu was killed when soldiers opened fire after being attacked. "The investigation further indicates that Abu Hilu very likely died from blows to the head and not from gunshots to his leg, as reported," said the group, also known as B'tselem, in a statement. Citing testimony from Palestinian witnesses, B'tselem said three soldiers in civilian clothes attacked a Palestinian villager without provocation during a training exercise. It said villagers, mistaking the soldiers for Jewish settlers, gathered at the scene and soldiers opened fire hitting Abu Hilu in the leg. Palestinian witnesses said one soldier forced Abu Hilu to the ground, sat on the back of his neck and beat him with a radio transmitter repeatedly over a period of about 20 minutes, according to the statement.

B'tselem said Abu Hilu was dead on arrival at West Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital. Hospital spokesman Yossi Shoval said doctors considered it very unlikely he died from the leg wound.

"Only in an autopsy can the actual cause of death be determined," he told Reuters, adding that doctors saw no external sign of other wounds.

B'tselem assailed what it said was the army's practice of sending soldiers dressed in civilian clothes into Palestinian villages for undercover training.

"Such activity demonstrates the army's profound disregard for Palestinian life," it said.

The group said undercover soldiers have killed 159 Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza since 1987. More than 1,200 Palestinians were killed in the Palestinian Intifada that erupted in December 1987.

Peru downplays rebels' decision to freeze talks

LIMA (AFP) — Peru's defence minister downplayed a rebel decision to suspend negotiations over charges that the authorities are digging a tunnel to retake the guerrilla-held Japanese ambassador's residence by force.

During a brief visit Thursday to Bolivia, Defence Minister Tomas Castillo denied the accusations by the Tupac Amaru rebels holding 72 hostages at the residence, calling them "the result of nervousness."

He said the negotiations would probably resume once the rebels were assured authorities were not tunnelling beneath them.

Mr. Castillo, who was in La Paz to discuss joint anti-terrorism measures with Bolivia, was responding to reporters' questions on the latest development in the 11-week hostage crisis.

The Marxist guerrillas abruptly suspended negotiations with Peru's government Thursday, charging it was tunnelling in to retake the ambassador's home and end the standoff by force.

The leader of the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) unit holed up in the residence since Dec. 17, Nestor Cerpa, relayed the decision to stop negotiating in a short-wave radio message.

"Everything indicates a military attack plan exists or at least that there is that intent, using a tactic of external attack and internal infiltration," Mr. Cerpa said.

Mr. Cerpa said his fellow hostage-takers had heard noises coming from below the mansion's floors for three days and charged government security forces were trying to burrow their way into the residence to launch a military attack.

"It has been happening with greater intensity since the early hours" of Friday, Mr. Cerpa said, adding that the hostages themselves would confirm hearing "strange noises."

Within minutes of Mr. Cerpa's announcement, three members of a "guarantors commission" created to monitor government-rebel talks arrived at the residence to talk with the rebels and assess the increasingly tense situation.

They were mediators Canadian Ambassador Anthony Vincent, an anti-terrorism expert; Roman Catholic Ayacucho Archbishop Juan Luis Cipriani; and Michel Minnig of the International Red Cross.

Iran quake victims are moved to tent camp

TEHRAN (R) — Relief workers have resettled tens of thousands of people whose homes were destroyed by an earthquake last week in the snow-swept mountains of north-west Iran, state-run Tehran Radio said.

The operation to settle more than 36,000 people made homeless by the Feb. 28 quake has ended and the victims have been resettled in tents and other temporary shelters in the agricultural region, the radio said.

It said 11,000 tents, 30,000 blankets, 200 tonnes of bread, 15,000 stoves, 95 tonnes of dates and 157,000 tins of food had been distributed to survivors of the quake, which measured 5.5 on the Richter scale.

Nearly 1,000 people were killed and 2,600 injured in the earthquake, which disrupted the lives of 60,000 people. It was followed by 500 aftershocks and another quake measuring 5.2 on Sunday night.

At least 200 school children were among those killed in the quake which destroyed 90 schools, the official news agency IRNA said.

It said many people chose to sleep in tents in below-freezing temperatures for fear of the aftershocks.

Jahalin petition Israel court for housing to replace their camp

AMMAN (J.T.) — Forty-two Jahalin families have petitioned the Israeli high court demanding that the State of Israel build them a housing project in place of the refugee camp which has been set up on the "alternative site" to which they have been expelled to allow for the expansion of the illegal Jewish settlement of Ma'ale Adumim in occupied Palestinian territory.

The Jahalin bedouin are now living in the latest Palestinian refugee camp created as a result of Israeli expansionism, a press release issued by the Jerusalem-based Catholic Human Rights Centre for Legal Resources and Development said.

After the Israeli forces deliberately destroyed all the dwellings of the Jahalin, and forcibly moved them to the "alternative site," the Jahalin are now homeless, it said.

The latest Palestinian refugee camp is on top of a hill exposed to the storms and raging winds without any of the amenities deemed necessary by the Israeli government for a Jewish housing project. There are no houses, no roads, no pavements, no street lights, no sanitary facilities and no garbage facilities.

Some, but not all, of the families were given ship containers for their goods. Ship containers have no doors opening on the inside, no windows, no insulation, no ceilings, no lights, no toilets, no bathrooms, no kitchen, no living room and no bedrooms. In fact, a ship container is only a ship container, built to carry cargo. They are not even suitable for animals.

The Jahalin are homeless and abandoned, suffering both physically and emotionally, as a result of deliberate Israeli government racist policy.

The Society of St. Yves, through advocate Lynda Brayer, has requested the high court to subpoena the State of Israel to come and justify itself as to why the bedouin should not be given decent housing, with a decent infrastructure, similar to that they have provided in Jewish Ma'ale Adumim.

After all, the Israeli government saved money by not having to buy the land for Ma'ale Adumim because all it had to do was declared it "state land" thus saving itself the trouble of having to pay financial compensation to rightful Palestinian landowners.

In the meanwhile, the Jahalin have requested that the Israeli government supply caravans in order that the Jahalin may have some shelter over their heads.

"According to international law, the Israeli government, as the military occupier of Palestine, remains responsible for those people who are forced to live under its military rule against their will. The creation of new refugees is a violation of the laws of war," the press release said.

Egypt moves to take control of all mosques

CAIRO (R) — The Egyptian government, fighting what it calls religious extremism, plans to control the country's 55,000 mosques and all Muslim preachers within five years, the minister of Islamic affairs said.

In its first 14 months, the present government has taken over 9,000 private mosques and the process will continue at a rate of 6,000 a year, Religious Endowments Minister Mahmoud Hamdi Zaqzouq told a news conference on Wednesday evening.

The people who run the remaining 30,000 private mosques have started applying for licences for their preachers under a law passed earlier this year, he added.

The attempt to impose orthodoxy is a reaction to a violent campaign by militants fighting to overthrow the government and make Egypt a strict Islamic state.

More than 1,000 people, mainly militants and police, have been killed in the violence, now largely confined to a few provinces in the Nile Valley south of Cairo.

"Perhaps one reason which moved us to the plan to bring the mosques under ministry control was to put an end to all forms of extremism which use mosques as a base," Mr. Zaqzouq said.

The minister made clear there would be no place in mosques for preachers who hold unorthodox doctrines or engage in political activity hostile to the government.